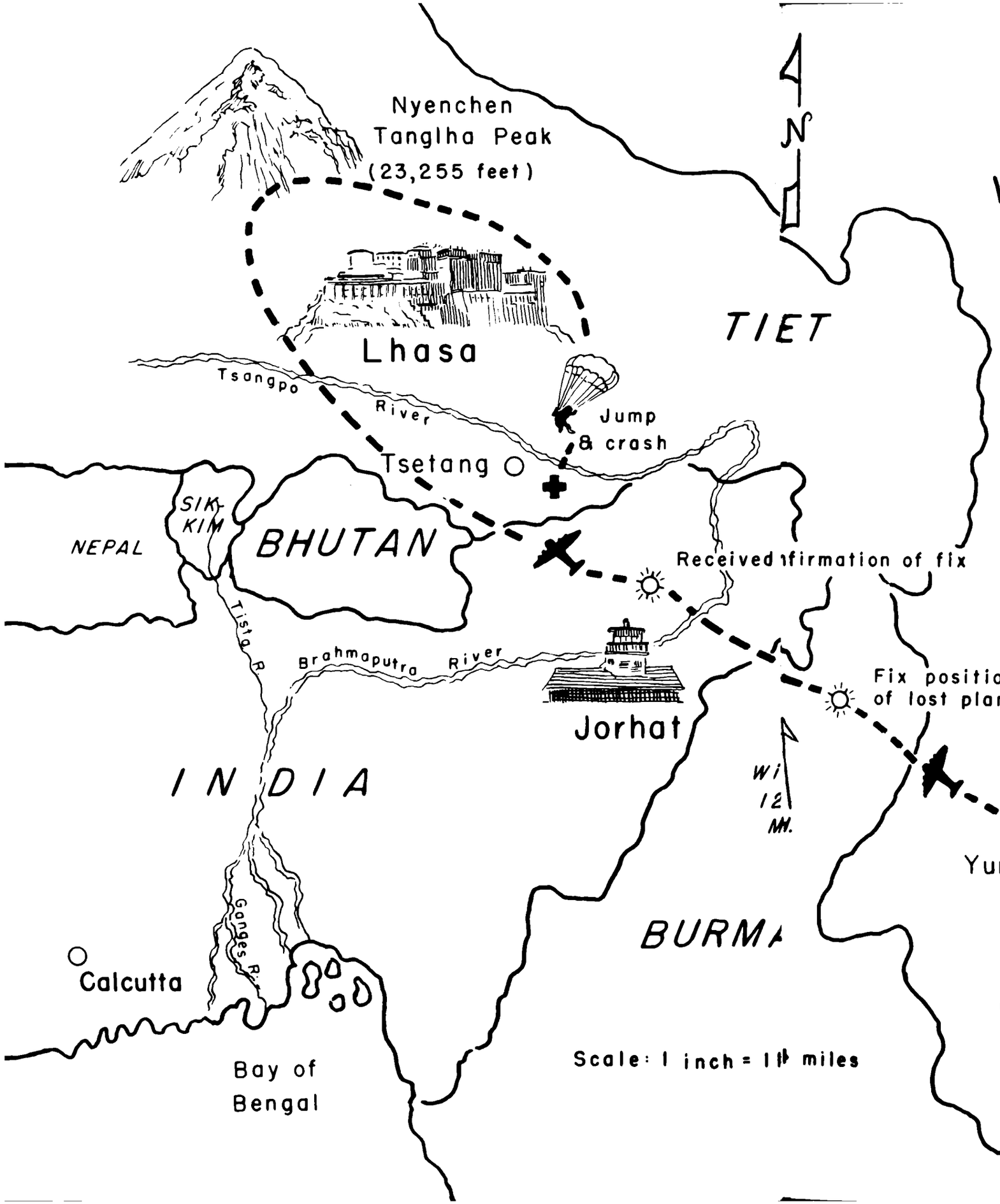

Why the Plane Was Lost

1. Erroneous fix possible.
2. Correct fix with delay in communications and higher than normal estimated speed of plane made the heading erroneous to get to Jorhat.
3. South wind at 120 m.p.h.
4. Bad radio communication.

MEMBERS OF THE CREW POSE WITH PEOPLE WHO BEFRIENDED THEM WHILE IN TIBET

Seated in front, left to right: an unidentified Chinese, McCallum, Spencer, Crozier, another unidentified Chinese, Parram, Huffman, and Mrs. Betty Sherriff. *Standing, back row, second from left,* Sinow Ulla; *sixth from left,* Doc Bo; the remainder are unidentified. Picture made by Chinese residents of Lhasa at the British Mission in December, 1943.

JUMP TO THE LAND OF GOD

The Adventures of a United States Air Force Crew in Tibet

By

WILLIAM BOYD SINCLAIR
Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force

Based on interviews with
ROBERT E. CROZIER
Former First Lieutenant, United States Air Force

ENDSHEET MAPS DRAWN BY ROBERT J. MCKINLEY

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To all the aircrews
That ever exchanged
Their wings for shoes

FOREWORD

IN THE EARLY SUMMER A FEW YEARS AGO, AS I SAT in my office in Austin, Texas, thinking how cool it would be in the Himalayan foothills, my thoughts turned to Tibet, that obscure, remote country on top of the world. In 1944, I climbed a mountain or two in China's Yunnan Province and gazed at the snow peaks along Tibet's eastern border. Again, in 1945, when I stood on the western border of Tibet, I really didn't know whether I was in Tibet or India, as the people thereabouts didn't concern themselves about political boundaries so long as they were left free to trade with one another. If I had tried to go farther, I should have been absent without official leave from the Air Force, and doubtless, unfriendly officialdom, superstitious people, and raw, rugged terrain would have stopped me, as they have others. I've always regretted I didn't see more of Tibet. It's strange that so many people I've talked to think it's a little country. It's bigger than Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico combined.

While I sat musing further—about a city I saw which had never known a wheel—in walked a big, tall fellow with a contagious grin.

"Crozier's my name," he said as he put out his hand.

"Don't tell me you're the Crozier who entered Tibet easier than anyone else ever did," I said quickly as I got up and shook hands with him.

"I entered Tibet, all right," he replied. "But I don't know about that *easy* part."

"What brings you to see me?" I asked. "I know about your story. I've always wanted to meet you and hear it from your own lips."

Crozier told me that Herbert H. Fletcher, Texas publisher, suggested that we get together and go over Crozier's adventure in Tibet in 1943 and 1944.

"Thought I'd drop in to see you, as I'm on my way home to Waco," Crozier concluded.

"Let's go somewhere and talk," I replied.

During a coffee break, I heard again about one of the longest journeys from a Himalayan airplane jump on record—fifty-two days, led by Lieutenant Robert E. Crozier, then of West, a little town near Waco, Texas. This time the story was from the leader of the trek himself.

Earlier, while in India, I had seen short newspaper accounts of the adventure and two magazine articles, one published by the Army and the other by one of the leading weeklies in the United States. One of the newspaper stories said the crew of Crozier's disabled C-87 cargo plane took ninety-three days to get back to the ill-fated craft's base. The newspaper writer doubtless had the story of Crozier and his men confused with that of Lieutenant Charlie Allison and his barefoot crew, who *did* take ninety-three days to get back home and almost starved on a diet of berries and bark.

Crozier, over his coffee cup in Austin's Driskill

Hotel, told me that, from the time they hit the silk over Tibet until they returned to their base at Jorhat, in India, the time elapsed was just a week shy of two months. They left Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan, in China, on November 30, 1943, and arrived in Jorhat on January 20, 1944.[1]

The brief magazine stories I read, Crozier told me, had some errors in them. All the accounts I had seen said the American airmen were welcomed, wined, and dined in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, by Lhasaites. As a matter of fact, Crozier said, they were mobbed and stoned by Lhasaites—and the reason was a strange one, as strange as the many strange things in that strange country. Chinese residents of Lhasa took particular pains to welcome them, but the newspaper and magazine accounts said nothing about their being Chinese—and no mention was made of the mob.

After they returned to India from Tibet, Crozier and his crew of four were interviewed by Corey Ford and Alastair MacBain one day in Calcutta from about nine o'clock in the morning through lunch. The only other interview they gave was to the British Broadcasting Corporation, also in Calcutta. This interview lasted a whole day. In both interviews, Crozier and his crew told their questioners about the mob in Lhasa.

There was no mention of the mob in Ford's and

[1] Lowell Thomas, Jr., on page 69 of his book, *The Silent War in Tibet*, writes regarding the time of this flight: "In January, 1944, one of the U. S. planes wandered off course and ran out of fuel among the cloud-fogged snow peaks." This is incorrect as to time. The plane ran out of gasoline and the crew jumped the last day of November, 1943. The five airmen got back to their base in January, 1944. (From *The Silent War in Tibet*, by Lowell Thomas, Jr. Copyright 1959 by Lowell Thomas, Jr. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, and Martin Secker & Warburg, Ltd., London.)

MacBain's feature article in *Collier's* magazine or in the B.B.C. broadcasts. No doubt reference to the mob was removed by Armed Forces press censors in the interests of international amity and the morale of air crews who were flying the Hump.

Crozier and the crew gave no interviews to anyone else. All other news and feature accounts of the adventure were written at second hand, including the one in the Armed Forces newspaper of which I was a member of the staff—the China-Burma-India *Roundup.*

I do not mean to imply that the writers of any of the accounts were careless because of any errors in them. I interviewed men in the Far East during World War II when the time and the situation were not conducive to thoroughness and accuracy. Also, I know men do not agree about what takes place in any incident of stress and strain. The most violent critics of the official histories of battles are men who fought in them.

There is no official Air Force or Army record of the adventure other than brief entries in morning and mission reports. No attempt was made to make an extended official version of it. General Tom Hardin of the Air Force took an interest, principally in what caused the plane to get off course. The only other questions asked the crew were a few unofficial ones stimulated by polite and brief curiosity.

The adventure of Crozier and his crew—called "The Shangri-la Crew" in some China-Burma-India quarters in World War II—is indeed a remarkable one. If one wanted to put it in the manner of the Orient, he could say that these five men left the City of Bright Omen in the Land of the Southern Cloud and ended up in the Land of God, on the Highland

of the Bo, far beyond the Abode of Snow. Bright Omen stands for Kunming, Land of the Southern Cloud for the Yunnan Province of China, and Lhasa and its surrounding territory is called "The Land of God" or "The Ground of God" by the Tibetan people. The literal meaning of "Lhasa" is "God's Land" or "God's Ground." To Bo, or "Highland of the Bo" is the Tibetan people's own name for their country, and of course, Himalaya means "The Abode of Snow."

If this language seems strange consider the translation of the Dalai Lama of Tibet's official permit for the first Englishmen to explore the northern approaches to Mount Everest. He authorized the expedition to be "to the west of the Five Treasures of the Great Snow in the jurisdiction of the Fort of the Shining Glass near the monastery of the Valley of Deep Ravines in the Southern Land of Birds."

Before their journey was done, Crozier and his crew did two things which were never done before in Tibet. They flew over Lhasa in an airplane. They "looked down" on the Dalai Lama and his official abode, the Potala, for which they incurred the resentment of Lhasaites. Both these acts, which they did not intend to commit and did not realize they had committed until much later, are only two among the many strange and adventurous things that befell them.

Their story has been told to me by Crozier when he has come through Austin on private business and when I have gone to Waco on official business, chronicled by telephone and letter, and drawn out in long interviews in his Waco office when we have found the time—over a period of more than five years.

This is the story as Crozier remembers it after

nearly twenty years. The direct quotations of people in the story have been constructed by me, based upon conversations with Crozier. Crozier's memory is hazy on some of the events, and these I have constructed as best I can. Crozier was unable to reach any of the living members of the crew in a search for more facts and memories.

I have taken certain liberties with the story, all with the approval of Mr. Crozier; but in the main this strange adventure is true. Both he and I have tried to reflect Tibetan life and custom faithfully, but ignorance may have caused blunders. The somewhat extensive annotation is mine, but I do not pose as a Tibetan scholar. If the story is not entertaining or informative to some degree, then it has no purpose.

A number of Tibetan, Chinese, Hindustani, and Anglo-Indian words and phrases appear in this story. Those not found in a good dictionary of the English language are set in italic type and their meaning is given in notes. No scientific transliteration is attempted in the case of the Chinese and Tibetan.

At some points in this story, some readers may assume that I have little admiration for the Tibetan people. Nothing could be farther from the truth. My respect for them is boundless. I love them for their faults as well as their virtues, and I hope they will love me and Mr. Crozier for ours, in case any of them happen to read this book. My sympathies are with them and India against the government of Communist China. May the people of Tibet and India prevail against the weapons, the lies, and the treachery of world Communism, of which Red China's leaders are only a part.

I express my thanks here to Mrs. Kathleen Eklund McGee of Austin, Texas, for her excellent work and criticism in producing the manuscript. Because of her interest, alertness, and intelligence, a major inconsistency and several minor ones have been removed from the text.

I am grateful for permission to quote from and refer to material in the following copyrighted works: *The Silent War in Tibet*, by Lowell Thomas, Jr., Doubleday & Company, New York, and Martin Secker & Warburg, London; *Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts; *Young Days in Tibet*, by Tsewang Pemba, Jonathan Cape, London; *Land of the 500 Million*, by George B. Cressey, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York; *Out of This World*, by Lowell Thomas, Jr., and The Greystone Press, New York; *Pioneering in Tibet*, by Albert L. Shelton, Fleming H. Revell Company, Westwood, New Jersey; *Seven Years in Tibet*, by Heinrich Harrer, Rupert Hart-Davis, Ltd., London, and E. P. Dutton & Company, New York; *Tibet and the Tibetans*, by Tsung-lien Shen and Shen-chi Liu, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California; *The Jewel in the Lotus*, by Sir Basil Gould, Chatto & Windus, Ltd., London; *To Lhasa in Disguise*, by William McGovern, Appleton-Century, New York; *The People of Tibet*, by Sir Charles Bell, Oxford University Press, New York; and *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet*, by Sarat Chandra Das, John Murray, Ltd., London. The quotations and references are identified in footnotes where they appear in the book.

WILLIAM B. SINCLAIR
Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force
AUSTIN, TEXAS
March 1, 1964

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JUMP
TO THE
LAND OF GOD

CHAPTER ONE

SPREADING MARE'S-TAIL CLOUDS, looking like rippled sand on a beach after the tide is gone, drifted in the cold sky above Kunming, China, on the afternoon of November 30, 1943. Old Kunming, with her moon gates, high walls, and horned roofs, seemed as mediaeval as in the days when Marco Polo knew her worn cobbled streets, more than seven hundred years before.

Yet, outside Kunming's quiet courtyards and stinking, disease-filled alleyways, out among the ancient cemeteries and old, unburied black coffins, lay a great air base and its garrison area, filled with modern men who flew daily above the high clouds and beyond the distant mountains.

Lieutenant Robert E. Crozier, Texas Hump pilot, standing on a long runway pointed toward blue hills, glanced up at the thin, drifting crystals floating twenty thousand feet above him.[1] He had seen many clouds like these over the Hump, as well as every other kind in the meteorologists' book. He didn't think much about them as he and his crew of four waited patiently in the quiet, cold weather for clearance to take their plane back to Jorhat, on the India side of the Himalayas. Their cargo plane, converted from a B-24 bomber, rested nearby with engines idle. Flying it over the highest mountains in the

[1] The Hump is a term of American GI origin applied to the air route over the Himalayas of Northeast India, North Burma, and China's Yunnan Province.

world in all kinds of weather was routine duty for them.

In addition to Crozier, a big, tall twenty-three-year-old Texan with a perpetual, boyish grin, was Flight Officer Harold J. McCallum, his copilot, from Quincy, Massachusetts. McCallum was a year older and a head shorter than Crozier, stocky, with a mass of black hair, and an air of congeniality and wit about him.

Sergeant William Parram, the engineer and crew chief, from Tulsa, Oklahoma, was the same age as Crozier and the handsome man of the crew. His blond hair was always parted neatly on the left side, whether he had time to wield a comb or not. His face was beyond the boyish stage, but there was no hint of age in it.[2]

Corporal Kenneth B. Spencer, the radio operator, from Rockville Center, Long Island, was only nineteen, the youth of the bunch. He had an unruly shock of hair, an infectious grin, and was almost as tall as Crozier—but with a boyish slenderness the Texan didn't possess.

The fifth member of the crew was really not a member at all, although he was taken on as assistant engineer for the scheduled flight across the Himalayas, just ahead. He was Private First Class John Huffman of Straughn, Indiana, a twenty-seven-year-old man with a thin, angular face, and thick, wavy hair, which he combed straight back. His moustache seemed to add more leanness and virility to his wiry body.

While the members of the crew talked, they were given clearance, and Crozier lifted the big cargo

[2] Parram, who was destined to survive the adventure just ahead of him, was later killed in a plane crash.

plane off one of the Kunming runways about four o'clock in the afternoon. He pointed her nose toward Yunnanyi, 125 miles to the northwest. The flight to Yunnanyi was in good weather and without incident. Forty-five minutes after they left the Kunming runway, they were over the Yunnanyi air base.

"Remember the eggs we brought to the mess hall down there at Yunnanyi?" Crozier shouted to McCallum above the roar of the four engines.

"Remember it?" McCallum shouted back. "How could I forget it? Fifty big baskets of Chinese eggs." With an acrid smile, he mimicked the Chinese waiters in the mess hall below. " 'How you like eggus, *Megwa ping?*[3] Eggus fly hard? Eggus fly soft? Eggus fly one side?' " He raised his voice louder for emphasis.

"Well, don't complain, son," Crozier advised through cupped hands. "It's only four hundred miles more to your shower and sack at Jorhat."

Crozier still kept her nose pointed toward the northwest as they left Yunnanyi behind, for Jorhat lay in that direction on the other side of the serrated, cloud-coifed mountain chain.

The first fifteen minutes of the flight from Yunnanyi was in broken overcast. After that, clouds began to thicken and flow around them, blotting out high rocks and snow-covered peaks. The clouds were so black and dense at times, the crew couldn't see the lights on the wing tips.

The turbulence at the heart of a mighty storm engulfed them, pitching the plane about in a high, howling wilderness. Two and a half hours later, when they should have been rolling down the Jorhat runway, they were still wandering a violent sky.

[3] *Megwa ping* is Chinese for *American soldier.*

In the beginning, Saint Elmo's fire played around the propellers, and then the radio went dead. Corporal Spencer, his youthful grin changed to a worried frown, couldn't raise the Jorhat tower—or any tower, for that matter—on the command radio set. He worked frantically, but was rewarded only with repeated failure.

In the meantime, Crozier climbed from nineteen to twenty-four thousand feet and broke out on top of the clouds. As far as he knew, they were near Jorhat, and since the Assam Valley is only about forty miles wide at that point, with mountains on either side going up thousands of feet, he was afraid to let down without guidance from the ground. Winds were pitching the plane about like a celestial cork in an airy flood. Later, Crozier was told that a south-southwest wind was blowing at 120 miles an hour at the altitude he had been flying.

Following Spencer's repeated efforts to reach Jorhat by radio, or any other tower, without success, Crozier instructed him to change from the command set to the liaison set, which was more powerful. When Spencer did so, he got through to Kunming almost immediately.

After Spencer reached the Kunming tower, Kunming reached Jorhat, 530 miles over the Himalayas. Jorhat took a bearing on the plane and reported the fix to Kunming. Kunming relayed the location to the plane, with instructions to fly north-northwest. This didn't appear correct to Crozier, so he asked Kunming to relay his request for confirmation. Jorhat told Crozier through Kunming that the instructions were correct. Crozier took up the heading and flew it at 25,000 feet until the Kunming signals, growing fainter each passing minute, were finally

lost. He surmised they were far to the north, off their course, and the thought briefly entered his head that they might be over Tibet somewhere.[4]

The plane bored on through the turbulent air, just above the silver sea of clouds beneath it. The four powerful, roaring engines, their fuel nearly gone, whirled the propellers into circles of reflected light from a faint moon. The crew was still flying just above the top of the overcast at about 23,000 feet when McCallum reported a large cloud formation looming up on the right side, a cone-shaped mass jutting above the level cloud sea just beneath the plane. At almost the same instant, Spencer, who was looking out on the left side of the plane, reported another. A moment later, McCallum gave a hoarse shout when he saw rocks in the snow of a mountain peak.

"Damn it, that's not a cloud," he cried. "It's a mountain. If it's a cloud, it's sure got rocks in it."

"There's a whole range of mountains sticking up over here," Spencer yelled.[5]

---

[4] Crozier often wondered in later years about the bearing which Jorhat took on the plane and the heading which he was instructed to fly. Of course, an erronous fix was possible. On the other hand, the bearing could have been correct, but delay in communication and higher-than-normal estimated speed of the plane would have made the heading erroneous to get the lost, wandering plane to Jorhat. The plane was probably southeast of Jorhat when the bearing was taken on it, but by the time the plane received the message through Kunming and asked and received confirmation, the storm most probably had carried it northwest of Jorhat. If this conclusion is correct, a north-northwest heading would have taken the plane nowhere near Jorhat. Neither would this heading have taken it to the point where the flight ended. But, again, the raging, 120-mile-an-hour south-southwest wind could have swept the plane in a northeast drift as it headed northwest. The spot at which the plane finally came to grief was far to the northeast of the northwest heading they were flying.

[5] Although the air crew didn't know it at the time, this was the Nyenchentanglha Range, which *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* says has peaks from 16,590 to 23,250 feet. Section 437 of the World Aeronautical Chart, Fifth Edition, with information current as of October, 1949, published by the United States Air Force, shows a peak going up to 23,705 feet. The peak which McCallum first saw was

"Let's get out of here," Crozier said decisively, pulling the plane around into a sharp 180-degree turn, reversing the course to a southeast heading. Calling Parram, he asked how much fuel was left.

"Only fifteen minutes, sir," Parram replied in tremulous tones, showing he was firmly ready for the worst.

Right then and there, Crozier knew with certainty that he was far north of his course. He gave orders for everyone to don parachutes. He realized they were flying over country where peaks eighteen to twenty thousand feet are common, and since they had seen several just now above 23,000, he knew they would have to jump, as the engines would soon quit. Strangely, the fact that they had to jump did not worry him.

The next ten to fifteen minutes they helped one another put on parachutes for their jumps—the first leaps any of them had ever made.

"This is one time I don't want to make any mistakes," Parram said as he adjusted his parachute harness. "This is the first time I've ever put one of these things on. I want to make certain I've done it right."

It must have been around half past nine, about fifteen minutes after they had seen the mountains, when a break came in the solid overcast, upon which the faint moon was still shining. The clouds parted briefly, and Crozier got a momentary glimpse of lights below. The moon-tinged, wind-spun blanket closed just as swiftly as it opened, but the pilot had time to get down through it. The lights were those

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probably Nyenchentanglha Peak, referred to in different geographical authorities as 23,250 to 23,256 feet high. It is about fifteen miles south of Nam Lake and sixty miles northwest of Lhasa, Tibet.

of a town, and the glow looked to Crozier as if they might be eight thousand feet down. Since the lights would have been twenty thousand feet below at Jorhat, Crozier realized they were flying over extremely high country.

"Believe I'll go down on the small chance there may be an airport here," Crozier said.

"Roger, Chief," McCallum replied. "Good idea."

They glided down to as low an altitude as Crozier dared and circled the town once without seeing a runway. Crozier realized they wouldn't be able to see an airport anyway unless it were lit, and he knew he was taking a gambling chance.

"Nothing here," Crozier said. "We better get back upstairs, or we may run into a mountain. That is, if we have enough gas to get back up."

The big cargo plane surged upward powerfully, her four engines still running, leaving the lights of the town twinkling faintly below.[6] Not many minutes after Crozier leveled off above the clouds at about 23,000 feet, one of the engines sputtered, coughed, and died, followed a few moments later by another. They had come about a hundred and fifty miles southeast since they had seen the mountains, and Crozier knew the other two engines would soon be dead. For the moment, the plane was maintaining its altitude well.

Crozier instructed Spencer to send out the "May-Day" distress call to all ships and stations, screw down the key, and abandon the radio. Then, setting the automatic pilot, he motioned McCallum to follow him back through the plane, and sent Parram ahead to jettison the back door. As he left the cockpit, Cro-

[6] The town was Lhasa, capital of Tibet, and the plane was the first ever to fly over the so-called Forbidden City.

zier noticed the altimeter showed 21,500 feet, which meant they had dropped about fifteen hundred. The remaining two engines were running, but by the time he got to the back of the plane, one was dying. To complicate matters, the door, instead of flying off in the slipstream, jammed.

When Parram pulled the emergency lever, yanking the pins from the door's hinges, he kicked it near the back. The door didn't fly off as it was supposed to do. When Crozier got to the rear of the plane, McCallum was assisting Parram with kicks toward the middle of the door. Crozier realized the slipstream was holding the door in, that it must be kicked on the front. Planting a solid blow on that area of the door, Crozier felt it give, then saw the wind catch it and sweep it into space.

"Men," Crozier yelled in loud tones as he turned to the crew, "when you get on the ground, don't move till daylight. Then start calling for each other. If you start wandering around in the dark, you may go over a cliff. Let's go!"

"You go first, Skipper," McCallum said. "We'll be right behind you."

Spencer, standing next to Crozier, had one hand on the pilot's shoulder as they both cast themselves through the yawning space where the door had been. The other three, Parram last, flung themselves into the black void onto the cold roof of the world.

They pulled the rings, opening their parachute packs, the moment they hit the slipstream, this quick action probably saving them from hitting the ground without benefit of umbrella. Flying where they were, they realized that solid ground might be anywhere from a few hundred feet to thousands of feet below them.

When Crozier's parachute opened, he glanced up on the backswing and saw Spencer's open umbrella about two hundred feet above him. He didn't have time to look a second time. He hit the side of a mountain so steep he began to roll down, unable to stop until the nylon blanket above him caught on a rock projection. Then the big, blossomed canopy folded, stopping him short of a drop hundreds of feet down a ledge, although he didn't realize the cliff was there in the darkness.

As he sat on rough, jagged rocks after coming to a halt, Crozier saw an explosion, with flames leaping up briefly in the blackness far, far, below him, and a long distance away. He knew the plane had crashed in a valley, far down the side of a high mountain from where he sat. Later, he found the plane hit the ground five thousand feet below the point where his parachute dropped him, and five miles distant. From where he sat in the darkness, Crozier reached some grass and weeds growing at less than arm's length. He pulled some of these and tried to light a fire, but evidently they were too green to burn, or were not combustible for some reason. He managed to pull his parachute down from above and wrap it about him, leaving several folds over him as cover. He lay shaking in eighteen-below-zero cold and gasped for breath in the rare, thin atmosphere.

McCallum later estimated his descent was less than five hundred feet, since he hit the ground on the backswing just after his parachute opened. He was knocked unconscious when he struck the rocks and had no idea of how much time had passed when he drifted back, first to a condition of numbness, then to one of bitter cold. Pulling on his shroud lines, he dragged his parachute toward him and,

wrapping himself in it, lay down to wait out the long, subfreezing night.

Spencer, the radio operator, right behind and above the pilot, saw Crozier plummeting earthward below him as he jumped. When Spencer pulled his ring, a buckle on the front of his parachute harness somehow reached his chin, cutting a slash to the bone. He hit the rocks quickly. The cut from the buckle felt like the sting of a small insect, so Spencer was surprised when he found blood flowing from it. Although the red stream coursed freely, it soon congealed. Spencer groped for his jungle pack in the darkness, found it, and got his iodine out. He daubed the cut as best he could in the darkness, and, like the others, used his nylon blanket for cover while he awaited the dawn.

Parram, the crew chief, got his feet entwined in the parachute's shroud lines somehow after jumping, but he managed to free himself, kicking and writhing, just before he reached solid rock. While descending, Parram thought, "Well, I did it right. Brother, that parachute silk looks better floating over my head than it would on any woman!" After he reached ground, he, too, pulled his parachute around him and tried to sleep.

Huffman, the lean, slender passenger with the moustache, fared worse than the others. He was plummeting earthward, head down, when he pulled the ring, opening his parachute. The big canopy flared with a report like the crack of a rifle, arresting his drop with a jerk, and bringing the full force of his falling body against the harness on his left shoulder. The force was so strong that it broke his shoulder there in midair, but he felt no pain whatever during the short time before his descent ended,

and he hadn't the faintest notion whatever that his shoulder was broken.

Almost immediately after he hit the ground, he thought it strange that his left arm felt rather numb and useless. Everything seemed quiet. His parachute appeared to be snagged on something high above him, and he tugged on it quite a while with his good right arm before freeing it. After it fell, he attempted to pull the nylon around him with his left arm as he lay stretched out on the rock beneath him. When he did so, a sharp pain shot through his shoulder, and he realized what had happened. As the night wore on, it was hard to tell which hurt him the most, the broken shoulder or the frigid cold. He told himself he would have to be patient till daylight.

CHAPTER TWO

WHEN DAWN WAS BRIGHT ENOUGH to disclose the terrain closely around him, Crozier observed, as he already had surmised, there was no snow. The country was bare and treeless, the black rocks, the gravel-filled soil, and the distant, ice-crowned peaks adding a lonely bleakness to the landscape. The brightening east brought a frosty pink luster to these far-off summits. Crozier immediately started calling out the names of the crew in a loud voice. Spencer raised up not three hundred yards away at his first yell.

"Gosh, I'm glad to see you, sir," Spencer said in relieved tones as he made his way toward Crozier.

"Boy, I'm glad to see you, too," Crozier replied. "Are you hurt?"

"Got a cut on my chin, and I'm cold," Spencer said. "But I'm all right."

Almost immediately, McCallum, the copilot, rose up from the very top of the mountain, at least a thousand yards higher, and shouted down. He also had heard Crozier's first cry, which came across a deep, steep-sided gorge between them. He told Crozier he was all right, except for a few scratches, bruises, and skinned places.

Crozier yelled at McCallum to stay where he was for the present and help call out for Parram and Huffman.

"Have you heard them?" Crozier hailed in a loud voice echoing from the rocks across the deep defile which separated them.

"No," McCallum shouted down. "I'll yell toward the other side of the ridge from where you and Spencer are."

They shouted for five or ten minutes without raising Parram or Huffman. They waited awhile and tried again, but with no results.

"Go down on the other side," Crozier boomed up to McCallum, "and see if you can find any trace of them."

Meanwhile, Spencer had reached into his jungle pack and got out a chocolate bar, from which he took a bite or two to assuage his hunger. Crozier daubed Spencer's cut with iodine, and they sat down to wait for the return of McCallum, now and then clamoring out the names of Parram and Huffman, and hearing their voices repeated as they bounced back and forth from the towering rocks and peaks. They got up then and searched a wide area, scrambling on loose scree, and detouring around rocks.

McCallum appeared back on the peak about nine or half past, whooping across the gorge that he had combed the entire side of the mountain over the ridge. The three agreed they were lucky to be alive and they also were of a mind that they ought to stay where they were for a while and keep calling for Huffman and Parram. They remained in their places for an hour, constantly looking for movement on the mountain, and now and then straining their throats and lungs with stentorian hails and whoops, only to hear echoes in the deathly stillness.

Huffman, at a point halfway between the spots where Crozier and Spencer had landed, was in a deep depression in the mountainside and could hear every word passing between McCallum and the other two.

He heard Crozier's instructions to McCallum to search the other side of the ridge and yelled in a loud voice to all of them, but they couldn't hear him from the depths of the hole he was in. Although Spencer and Crozier wandered all around the vicinity, they never saw the deep cavity into which Huffman's parachute had lowered him.

"I hate to think of it," Crozier at last lifted up his voice to McCallum, "but I'm afraid maybe Parram and Huffman are dead. Maybe their 'chutes didn't open. What's worse, maybe they're stretched out hurt somewhere. Maybe they're unconscious. But where? That's the question."

"Yeah, where?" echoed McCallum. "It might be any direction."

"Sure," said Spencer, feeling his cut chin, then pointing downward to a river, which seemed thousands of feet beneath them. "I think we ought to get down there. Maybe we'll find them on the way. At least, maybe we'll find somebody. What do you think, sir?" he asked Crozier.

"That's right, Spencer," Crozier replied. "We ought to get down to that river. It's the most likely place to find people—and I hope if we do, they're friendly."

"What direction is that?" McCallum asked.

"North," said Crozier.

"How far do you think it is down there?" Spencer mused.

"No telling," Crozier said, "the way we'll have to go. Probably have to retrace our steps a lot. I'd say we're about eighteen thousand feet altitude here. The river's at least five thousand feet below us. Guess we can breathe easier down there."

Crozier realized that McCallum couldn't get down to them over the steep sides of the gorge which separated them, so he sang out to McCallum to go down the other side of the mountain and join them at the distant river they could see from where they stood. McCallum bellowed back that the descent looked much easier on that side and said he could see the river from where he was.

"Are we stopping the search for Parram and Huffman?" McCallum asked in a voice that was beginning to get hoarse from the vociferous level of the conversation.

"We'll have to," Crozier responded, if we're going to have a chance of getting there before dark."

They started immediately, not realizing that the river, ten miles away as the crow flies, was the mighty Brahmaputra of India, called the Tsangpo in Tibet. They worked their way down steep slopes, slippery scree, around great boulders, and across passable ledges and cliffs; but often they had to retrace their steps at impassable spots. With hearts pounding, breath short, and the feeling they wanted to fall down and sleep the whole thing off, they stopped regularly to rest, gazing around them in all directions to the snowy heads of great peaks high on distant horizons. As they progressed downward, these ice-topped mountains dropped from sight.

The descent to the river took them nearly all day. Crozier and Spencer arrived at its banks about four o'clock in the afternoon and found its course was half a mile wide, with the water flowing next to the far bank. The bank on which they stood was fine sand, but the wide, dry bed between them and the water was a wilderness of giant boulders. McCallum joined them soon afterward.

Crozier remembered his training. Always move downstream when lost in an unknown country. He assumed the river was flowing west, so the three set out in that direction. As they walked along, they observed the stream's channel was gradually coming over to their side, bringing the water toward them. After a walk of three miles, the water was next to their bank, and Crozier quickly observed that the river was flowing east instead of west. It was almost dusk when this realization struck Crozier that they had been walking upstream since they came to the river.

With a cold, inhospitable darkness dropping down quickly, the three sat down wearily behind a high sand dune to break the bitter wind which had been blowing all afternoon. They were hungry, having had nothing to eat since the bite of chocolate that morning, so they decided to eat the remaining part of their chocolate bars. Reaching into their jungle packs, they pulled out the candy and munched as they talked.

Crozier sat awhile after swallowing the last of his bar, wondering why he was not afraid because of their situation. Mostly he thought about Parram and Huffman, wondering if he would ever hear of them again.

Knowing the night would be long, cold, and without a doubt, sleepless, the three men took action to add to their cover and to benefit each other with their body heat. Folding the three parachutes together, like three blankets on a bed, they got down on one end and rolled up together. Only the man in the middle got much sleep. He was also warmer. Considering the sub-zero cold, the other two were fairly warm.

Just as Crozier was dozing off—it seemed hours later—he heard Spencer say, "We forgot to set the thermostat."

CHAPTER THREE

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JOHN HUFFman was dozing fitfully, dreaming of his home back in Indiana, when he sprang suddenly awake. He thought he heard his name called. Gathering his wits about him, he looked around and found an almost perpendicular rock wall on all sides. He seemed to be at the bottom of a deep dry well. It was almost dark down around him, but he could see morning light on the rocks at the top. Directly above him, he saw a small circle of blue sky. He had descended into a deep hole.

Listen. There they were again. Voices. They seemed right above him. He heard someone shouting his name. It sounded like the pilot's voice—Lieutenant Crozier. But he hadn't known him long. He couldn't be sure. Then he heard the voice calling out all the names of the crew except Crozier's, so he knew it was the pilot doing the shouting that time. The other voice must be Spencer's. He started up quickly, jarring his broken shoulder, which silenced the yell he was about to give Crozier in return. Getting to his feet with the aid of his good arm, he cried out the pilot's name. Almost immediately, he heard another voice, this time not so loud and seemingly a longer distance away.

"That's McCallum, the copilot," he said to himself. "At least four of us are alive."

Huffman didn't realize it then, but the deep hole he found himself in was about midway between

where Crozier and McCallum came down on the mountain and a quarter of a mile from each.

Huffman began returning the shouts, calling out not only the names of the pilot and copilot, but those of the other two crew members as well. He soon heard Crozier's voice coming closer, so he shouted all the louder; but after a while, McCallum's cries drifted off, growing fainter, and soon he didn't hear them anymore. He was sure he heard Crozier tell McCallum to look for himself and Parram on the the other side of a ridge.

He realized he must try to get out, so he bundled his parachute and tied one of the shroud lines around his middle. He wanted to drag it to the top with him—that is, if he could get to the top. He caught hold of a protruding rock with his useful arm and placed his right foot on another. He had clambered up only a few feet when he fell back to the bottom, striking his head on a rock. He barely noticed the blow on his head, he felt so much pain in his shoulder as a result of the impact. He tried again, out of breath, and didn't get as far as he did the first time. On the third try, he got higher than on the first two; but his foot slipped and he hit bottom again.

He lay with lungs heaving, but otherwise motionless, on the rocks, wondering if he would ever get out. Just as the thought struck him that he might starve to death in this hole he was in, he heard the three voices calling both his and Parram's name. He shouted as loud as he could with his short, gasping breath, time after time. When he could shout no more, he heard his three comrades yelling, saying they would meet at a river they could see. The voices continued for a short time after that, growing no

louder, and then they stopped, and he heard them no more. He lay still for a long time after the sound of the voices was gone.

After what seemed hours to him, he got his breath back and staggered to his feet. He was resolved to tackle the circular wall, which he estimated was forty or fifty feet high. He had to climb out of this dry well in a rocky wilderness. He placed his right foot on a rock projection and caught hold of another with his useful hand. He began climbing, and this time he got the bundled parachute off the ground below him before he fell. As he lay on the rocks, he began to feel a sense of desperation about this combined cliff and chasm; but he tackled it again with the grimness of a man who knew if he couldn't succeed in the climb, he would starve or freeze to death.

It was late afternoon, with the sun shining faintly through scattered clouds in the west, when he crawled away from the top of the hole. He had made it. He lay still on the ground, breathing hard, but with thanksgiving in his heart because he was out. He almost didn't notice his hurt shoulder. He remained quiet for a while, then got up and pulled the parachute bundle away from the edge, as if it were the void of space, or a bore into hell, then began shouting the names of all other members of the crew. As he yelled and cried out time after time, the rocks flinging his voice back in his ears, he began to lose hope that any of them were within earshot. He knew three of the crew were alive; but apparently they were beyond range of his voice. He had heard Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer say they would meet at the river they saw. It would be rough going, but he must try, in spite of his broken shoulder, to get down there, thousands of feet below.

Because the afternoon was waning, he knew he would have to get started if he expected to get to the river. He began moving down the mountain. Somewhat to his surprise, it turned out to be easy sailing compared to getting out of the hole, and he arrived at the river just before full dark.

He hadn't walked along the bank far until he saw tracks in the sand going west. Since he had eaten a chocolate bar earlier and had rested once on the mountain, he set out following the tracks at once, hoping to find the others before the light of day was gone. But the cold twilight faded quickly, and then darkness descended on the tracks and he could no longer see them. As he walked along the river, stumbling now and then in the darkness, he passed within a few feet of Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer sleeping behind the sand dune. He walked onward most of the night, always following the river, until he came to a village, which he later learned was called Dranang. He saw a light, and on approaching, found a cluster of houses, the backs of the outside ones constituting a wall, built that way by the villagers for protection against the cold as well as bandits who roamed the mountains.

He wandered into a crooked street, meeting some of the inhabitants, and made signs that he was hungry. To show them that he was friendly, he gave one of them his knife. The villagers brought food, and he handed them some of his parachute shroud lines and the nylon parachute cloth.

The villagers showed him into a house, which was a combination of rock masonry and adobe sod. It was built mostly of sun-dried blocks of clay, so Huffman concluded that, wherever he was, it didn't rain much. A heavy rain would have washed the house

down. The bottom part of the house was a stable, with a horse and several long-haired, oxlike animals tethered in it. The people of the village helped him through the stable to a ladder which led to the upper story.

"This is child's play," he thought to himself as he ascended it, using his good, able arm. With a tremor, he remembered his breathtaking climb out of the rough, rocky hole that had almost been his roofless prison and unfilled grave. His heart overflowed with gratitude toward these sheepskin-clad people for the gift of this simple shelter.

Apparently the house belonged to a man of authority in the village because the other people stopped short at the foot of the ladder when he raised his voice sharply at them. He followed Huffman up the ladder.

They were soon on the second floor in a dirty, poorly lit room, in a corner of which a lamp, fed by fat of some kind, cast flickering shadows on two fierce-looking idols painted in several colors. As his eyes grew accustomed to the semidarkness, he made out the form of a woman lying on some old sheepskins and comforters. Acrid smoke rose from a fire of animal dung in a large brass vessel, making his eyes smart and water. Another woman, younger than the one on the sheepskins, hovered over a small baby resting by the older woman. The child whimpered and cried softly and seemingly breathed with effort. The younger woman looked up shyly and uneasily at Huffman as he came in, then bent over the older woman again, who did not appear to see him. Huffman thought the baby was sick, perhaps dying.

He watched the child awhile in the company of the man who had followed him up the ladder, then he

made signs by lowering his head and repeatedly closing his eyes that he was tired and sleepy. The man got up from his seat on the floor, went into another part of the house, and soon returned, motioning Huffman to follow him.

They entered another room, much like the first, except it had no painted gods in the corner. Evidently the former room was the family shrine. This one was lit by a flickering lamp of the same kind he saw in the first room. There was a smell of rancid butter in the air, so Huffman concluded the lamps were fed by old butterfat. The light of the lamp disclosed sacks of sheephide containing he knew not what, and over against a wall was a supply of what he took to be dry cow dung such as he had seen many times in India. On the floor was a bed of skins and comforts, and the man led Huffman straight to it. Huffman was glad as he knelt down to crawl onto the bed. Before lying down, he picked up the sheepskin pillow at the head for some reason—to turn it over, perhaps—and when he did, he got the most satisfying surprise a man in his predicament could ever have imagined. His heart went out in sudden, grateful thanksgiving to the strange, dirty, outlandish man who stood above him.

There, under the pillow, was the knife he had given this man when he first arrived in the village. Huffman understood his host completely; he had broken through the language barrier. Putting Huffman's own knife under his pillow was the man's way of assuring him that he was completely safe in this rude home. Huffman looked up at him with a faint smile of gratitude as he replaced the pillow over the knife. He crawled onto the bed and pulled the comforters and skins about him.

His kind and understanding benefactor stood and looked at him for a long time, then left, and just as Huffman was about to get up and extinguish the smoking butter lamp, the man reentered the room, leading the younger woman. The man made signs for Huffman to move over and motioned the girl to lay on the bed beside him. Huffman's feeling of gratitude was replaced by one of amazement when he understood that the man was giving the woman to sleep with him if he chose. Huffman was frightened and confused at this new turn of hospitality—a hospitality that apparently knew no bounds. Grasping mentally for some act or deed that would not offend his strange host, he feigned illness, pointing toward his swollen shoulder with his good hand, and rubbing and hanging his head repeatedly. The man nodded as if he understood, pushed the girl toward the door, and extinguished the smoking, flickering lamp. Before Huffman fell asleep, his last thoughts were neither of the man, the girl, nor the knife, nor—strangely enough—of his broken shoulder. His last conscious realization was of his cold, tired, aching feet.

He awoke in the night at a seemingly far-off sonance of weeping, quiet and muffled; then he realized it was coming from the room over the ladder. He lay a long time listening to the mysterious, incessant sound. Apparently it was one of the women crying, and for a time he wondered why, as he drifted along in a half dream. Then he remembered the baby. It must be extremely ill, or maybe it had died. It was such a tiny little wisp of humanity; it must have been newly born, he thought. He decided to get up.

When he reached the door of the room where the woman was lying, the still flickering butter lamp

revealed a strange sight. Another man was in the room now, a man dressed in a thick, red robe. He bent his head, closely cropped in a crew-style cut, over the limp, lifeless form of the baby. Another man came up the ladder with a large piece of pottery. The man in the red robe took the big earthen jar and put it down by the baby, then picked up the little body and placed it in the jar face up. The man who brought the clay vessel in which the dead baby now reclined went back down the ladder and soon returned with several lengths of rope made of the hair of some animal. Fastening four lengths of the rope to the jar, the men suspended it close to the ceiling. The woman was still weeping quietly as Huffman turned unseen toward his bed. There, he listened again, and soon he heard no sound except the pounding of his own heart in his ear. After a time, once more he slept.

Meanwhile, Sergeant William Parram, the crew chief, waking under his parachute in the dawn of the morning after his jump, shook with the cold as he crawled out. He got to his feet and looked around him. He decided he was on the side of a mountain, as the rocks towered steeply above him. He surmised there was a valley below him, but he couldn't tell how far it was to the bottom, as the slopes lower down were still shrouded in darkness. He was thankful he wasn't hurt in any way. His feet ached in the cold, and he walked back and forth a little to warm himself as much as he could. Even with this little exertion, he was soon out of breath and lay down again to rest. Then he got up and started down the mountain.

After he climbed down a long way, he suddenly

remembered that Lieutenant Crozier had told them to shout each other's names at daylight, so he called out to all the crew, including himself. Once, after repeating his own name, he cried, "From Tulsa, Oklahoma." He didn't know what made him do that—he supposed to vary the monotony of repeating the names. He got no response to his shouts except the repetition of them as they bounced off rock walls and pinnacles. Sometimes, it seemed, the echoes were repeated three or four times before they died out. He didn't worry too much, as he thought he was going toward the others. As a matter of fact, he was not. As he learned later, the plane, at the time of their jump, was flying in a direction opposite to what he thought.

As the sun rose higher, darkness departed from the valley below him, and he could see there was a stream at the bottom. He didn't realize it, but he was far on the other side of the ridge from where Crozier, Huffman, and Spencer hit the ground. When McCallum had descended from the mountaintop in search of both Parram and Huffman, he had come down in Parram's general direction; but neither McCallum nor Parram ever heard each other, probably because Parram started climing down earlier. The stream which Parram saw, therefore, was not the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) River, which Crozier, McCallum, Spencer, and Huffman had seen from the opposite side of the mountain. Parram was gazing down from his side of the mountain southeast onto a smaller tributary stream called the Yarlung River, which flowed north into the Tsangpo between twelve and fifteen miles away, near a village called Tsetang. But he could not see the big river from where he was.

He decided to try getting down to the stream below, so, gathering up his parachute, he started picking his way carefully. He slipped on loose stones, crawled down rocks, retraced his steps, and steadied himself on the edges of sheer cliffs while picking up courage to get past dangerous spots. Sometimes he found himself climbing to seek an easier and less dangerous course. His breath, of course, grew short, and he paused often to rest.

Finally, late in the afternoon, he came to an impassable cliff, which he could neither go around nor climb down. He knew he could never get back before dark to where he started from, let alone back to the peak of the mountain, so he resolved to spend the night where he was. He ate part of his chocolate bar, climbed a little way back toward the top, and found a sheltered spot out of the biting, bitter wind. His feet were very cold and seemed to get colder as the deep hours of the night passed. After a long time, he slept.

Next morning, Parram awoke to find his feet frostbitten. They felt brittle, like they were full of ice or snow, and his toes reminded him of hard, white pebbles. The soles of his feet were so sore and painful he was almost unable to walk. Pulling off his shoes, he found his feet swollen and inflamed, with alternate red and blanched spots. His feet itched in places, and small broken lesions already had appeared between his toes.

He knew he had to move, though, so he pulled his shoes back on and climbed toward the peak, limping painfully on his sore feet. He wanted to get to the top and go down on the other side to see if he could find any trace of the crew. Finally, his feet were hurting him so, he began crawling up the mountain instead

of staying on his feet. The wind began to blow right through him, it seemed, and somehow he got the idea in his mind that one of the others was somewhere behind. This notion became so strongly a part of his thinking that he looked back once to see who among the other four it was. Then, when he decided to eat the remainder of his chocolate, he caught himself dividing it because of the temporary illusion that one of his comrades was not far in the rear.

Night caught him at about the point where he had started from on the morning before, when he had worked his way down. By this time, his feet were going dead on him. He spent the night at this spot, and all the next day he crawled and clambered toward the top. Despite a full day of hard, intermittent struggle, during which he often cried out the crew members' names as loudly as he could, black night stopped him near the peak. Deep sleep inside the folds of his parachute brought ease to his tired body, but next morning he found himself too weak and miserable to move. He had no feeling at all in his feet. Hungry and cold, he lay stretched on the ground in despair.

He had spent the most trying night of his life. He was almost overcome by the rare air, intense cold, and gnawing hunger. He had only strength enough to shudder, which was caused as much by the thought of his plight as by the cold. His spirit was as grim, bleak, and dreary as the dismal, rock-filled landscape.

CHAPTER FOUR

CROZIER AWOKE BEFORE DAWN THE second morning after the jump, almost frigid with cold. He called to McCallum and Spencer who also were awake.

"We better get up and get moving," Crozier urged, after they rolled out of the folds of their combined parachutes. "We need to use every bit of daylight to find somebody."

"Yeah," McCallum replied, feeling the stubble that had grown on his chin. "I want to meet somebody—anybody—I don't care who it is."

"I wonder where we are," mused Spencer. "I wonder how far it is to Jorhat."

"I'll say one thing," said McCallum. "We're not near Jorhat. That's a cinch. Not the same kind of country. This country's cold and high. You know how Jorhat is. Sort of like a Turkish bath, even at the most favorable seasons."

"I don't see how we can be anywhere else but Tibet, considering the fix the Jorhat tower made on us," Crozier said. "Also, the heading they told us to fly."

"Tibet?" Spencer mused, moodily feeling the cut on his chin. "Oh, my bare bottom."

"How do you suppose we'll ever get out?" McCallum asked, not speaking particularly to anyone. "Float out on this river, provided the ice doesn't stop us?"

"Now, how do we know where the river goes?"

questioned Crozier. "Besides, we'll have to do something about a boat or raft before that happens."

"Hope we find somebody who knows something about the country," McCallum wished.

"I could use some GI chow right now," said Spencer, changing the subject to a more immediately felt need.

"You may be eating worms instead of GI chow before it's over," Crozier said to Spencer. "I could stand a cup of that steaming GI java myself, but don't get your hopes up too quickly."

Just as the first, faint grey of dawn was breaking, the three moved down along the riverbank. Crozier glanced back toward the mountain with a swift sense of regret, wondering if he were leaving Parram and Huffman dead or alive. The three airmen walked for several hours, rested, then walked on again without seeing a sign of human habitation. The sun poured down on them, and they were hot; but they noticed, when they sat down in the shade of a huge rock, that the cold was biting there. The air was dry and thin, with little humidity.

"Bet there's a difference of eighty to ninety degrees from last night," Crozier said as he wiped small beads of sweat from his forehead.

Walking into the shade of the huge boulder was just like entering a cool cave.

Along toward the middle of the afternoon, the three rounded a bend in the river and came upon a man and woman resting by the riverbank. These people reminded Crozier of Navajo Indians he had seen in northwestern New Mexico around Gallup. The two had straight, black hair and coppery skin and wore single sheepskin garments with the wool next to their bodies. They had no gloves, but the

sleeves of their clothing dangled below their hands, protecting them from the cold.

The man and woman, evidently shepherds or farmers, seemed afraid but curious. At first they tried to move away, but their wonder at these strange, outlandishly dressed men overcame their fear.

McCallum was by far the best Hindustani scholar among the three, so he ventured a simple statement in that language of India.

"*Mai Imreekan hoo,*" he stated.[1]

"*Laso, laso,*" the man in the sheepskin garment answered.

"*Laso*?" Crozier interjected. "What's that mean? Is that Hindustani?"

"If it is, it's a word I don't know," McCallum responded. "I'll try something else."

"Ask them where the nearest village is," Crozier suggested.

"*Sabsay paas ka gaaoo kahaa hai*?" McCallum tried.[2]

He got the same reply. "*Laso, laso.*"

"Tell him to get some food," Spencer said.

"*Kuchh khaana laiyay,*" McCallum responded toward the man.[3]

"*Laso, laso.*"

McCallum paused.

"Try something else," Crozier directed.

"*Mayray paas cigarette hai,*" McCallum said, pulling out his last two cigarettes. "*Mai tumhaaraadost hoo.*" He turned one of the pockets of his

[1] "I am an American."

[2] "Where is the nearest village?"

[3] "Bring some food."

trousers inside out. "*Mayray paas roopya nahee hai.*"[4]

McCallum offered the man the cigarettes. The man stepped forward and took them, then stepped back quickly.

"*Laso, laso.*" It was the same old reply.

McCallum turned to Crozier.

"We're getting nowhere fast," he said in tones of failure.

"Well, it's a cinch this joker doesn't know but a word or two in this language, whatever it is," Crozier commented in testy tones. "*Laso*? Don't you know what that means, McCallum?"

"Sorry to disappoint you, Chief," McCallum responded, "but I don't. Could be Hindustani," he mused, "but I don't think so."[5]

"He's probably saying he doesn't understand," Crozier guessed.

They gave up trying to talk to the two rustic-clad inhabitants of these bleak mountains and began talking about them instead.

"Bet those sheepskins with the wool inside are warm," Spencer said.

"Yeah, but a good breeding place for lice," McCallum commented.

"I'd say it's too cold for a louse here," Crozier observed.

By signs, the three made the man and woman understand they were hungry, and the two, reticent at first, finally motioned uneasily for the airmen to follow them. They trudged on through heavy, drifted sand and past glistening black rocks on a narrow path scarcely a yard wide above the river

[4] "I have cigarettes. I am your friend. I have no money."

[5] "*Laso, laso,*" in Tibetan, means simply "Yes, yes."

whirlpools, just behind their newly found acquaintances. The river wound here among low hills, in places half a mile broad, in others hardly a hundred yards in width. The water appeared deep, with a dark, sluggish current and eddies.

When the sun began to sink low in the west, they came in sight of another river, smaller, and apparently a tributary of the big one they had been following. Soon, just as the sun was setting, they crossed over a low rise and saw what looked like a walled town or village at a point where the tributary ran into the big river. A long stone bridge crossed the tributary stream just at the edge of the village.[6]

It seemed to be quite a large town of perhaps several hundred people, with a grove or two of tamarisk trees around it, the first trees they had seen since they jumped. From where they first saw the town, it had a rather solid appearance in the fading light, making it look like a fortress rather than a village. As they approached closer, they could see long lines of wind-torn flags fluttering in the wind from the flat rooftops.

They saw no people as they drew nearer and they walked through what appeared to Crozier to be a gate and remained several minutes before they were spotted by the inhabitants. The gate led into a winding, narrow street, and as they stepped into it, Crozier had a chance to look around before a big crowd of people gathered. From where they stood, Crozier could see a bazaar, but no one seemed to be in the marketplace. He later counted forty or fifty stalls, with mutton, butter, barley, and tea for sale in them; but everything was empty now.

What Crozier had taken to be the village wall

[6] The tributary was the Yarlung River.

was really the stone and adobe back walls of the houses on the perimeter of the town. Dead grass and a stunted bush or two had taken root in the sun-dried mud in places, reminding Crozier of the thick rock walls at Chanyi, in China, where he had seen a tree growing on the old, thick battlements around the gate. The bricks apparently had straw, reeds, or grass mixed in the clay, a sort of wattle-and-daub or stud-and-mud building block. In the dry, thin air, these sun-dried walls and their beams, painted blue and red, would remain standing indefinitely. From these structures, Crozier judged they were in a reasonably dry climate, beyond the range of the moisture-laden monsoon from the Bay of Bengal. He, therefore, concluded definitely that they were across the high Himalayas, north of India.

The backs of the houses, built up against one another, really served as an outer wall for protection. These houses were two-story, with a patio or courtyard in front of each facing the street, and walls eighteen inches thick around the patios. Similar houses faced the street on the other side, built against one another. The street they were on disappeared in twists and turns through the village, which they later learned was called Tsetang.

Crozier noticed flowerpots in doors and windows and clothes and blankets hanging over walls. On a roof above a door were the head and curving horns of a blue mountain sheep. Crozier at first thought it was a live animal above the parapet of the roof, but later recognized it was the head of a dead one mounted there. He later saw more sheepheads in this and other villages, erected much as a hunter mounts trophy heads of animals on walls in Amer-

ica and the Western world, but here they were always on the roof.

The first people Crozier saw were walking on the walls, along the fronts of the courtyards, level with the top of the first story of the houses, ten or twelve feet above the ground. Later, Crozier observed that the villagers got around the town mostly by walking on the walls, since they lived in the upper stories, keeping their animals below.

News that the airmen were in the town spread like wildfire evidently, for soon dozens of villagers came running toward them, both along the walls and on the ground. Surrounding the Americans, the people touched them and plucked at their clothes, chattering excitedly. Children came close to them and gazed up into their faces with steadfast curiosity—that is, when they could elbow their elders out of the way. Still more people came, all trying to get close to the three, and began pushing and crowding one another as well as the strange foreigners. While pulling at their clothing and parachutes and talking in loud voices, one of the villagers almost knocked Spencer off his feet. Soon there was a wild melee of excitement.

Crozier began to fear that everything was not motivated by curiosity He thought they should try to get out of the village, as he feared violence might take place.

"Move toward the gate," he told McCallum and Spencer. "Follow me. We'd better get out of here."

They pushed their way through the crowd, backing up at first, then after getting clear, they almost ran toward the gate. They dashed through it quickly, the entire village following right behind them with an excited babel of voices.

They headed back toward the river, and when they got down along the bank, they saw for the first time several big stone and clay edifices which they took to be monuments of some kind. These imposing rock and adobe structures had square bases and domes and spires at the top. One of them, bigger than the others, had tufts of grass growing in the wind-eroded clay, giving it an old, ruined, and decayed appearance. Around it was a covered gallery, on which was placed a row of metal drums or barrels, mounted head up, so they would turn or spin if moved.

Crozier later found these structures were *chortens* or tombs, erected to hold sacred objects, or the remains of great departed lamas. The drums or barrels were prayer wheels, enabling an illiterate people to pray with the flick of a finger.

When the airmen saw swastikas painted on the *chortens*, a tremor of uneasy fear was added to the scare the villagers already had thrown into them. Crozier and his crew had associated the swastika only with the Nazis, with whom they were at war. They did not know at the time that the swastika is a universal symbol, used, among others, by American Indians. They did not realize that these swastikas, along with other symbols, constituted a religious insigne to the villagers, symbolizing the ceaselessness of change, or simply good luck. They had no idea the swastika was associated with Buddhism or Lamaism, or an even more ancient religion, Bon.

The bronze-faced villagers continued to follow the three airmen for about half a mile, then stopped to talk to one another. After that, they tracked the airmen faster for another half mile, trying to catch

them. They were almost on the three when they paused again, shouting, talking, and gesticulating. When the villagers halted this time, Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer fell back for about seventy-five yards. The crowd seemed to express no anger, only excitement. Nevertheless, Crozier thought they should keep away from these people.

"Get out your pistol and fire it in the air," Crozier told McCallum.

McCallum drew the .45 service pistol from its holster and pointed the barrel upward, pulling the trigger. The report echoed and reechoed from the rocky uplands. The shot seemed to startle the villagers and they didn't come a step nearer.

The three crewmen walked to the bank of the river and sat down wearily to rest. They were hungry and gasping for breath, but no longer cold after the exercise and excitement. There was still light enough to see, but it wouldn't be long until darkness blotted out the villagers gathered such a short distance away.

As the fliers sat pondering their next move, they saw one of the villagers, apparently a man of middle age, start walking toward them alone. He was short and thin, wore a fur cap and heavy cloak, the sleeves of which fell down around his fingers. His face betrayed neither hate nor friendship, if he felt either; but he held his hands out before him, then he raised his hand to his forehead.

"*Salaam alicum,*" he tried experimentally, then smiled.

Crozier and the others were overjoyed to hear this familiar greeting they had learned to know so well in India.

"*Alicum salaam,*" McCallum responded quickly.

"Gosh, he talks Hindustani," Spencer spoke up.

"Well, he and I both know the refined way of greeting a Moslem in India anyway," said McCallum. "At least we know how to say, 'Peace be with you.'"

"Peace sounds wonderful," Crozier blurted out in thankful and relieved tones.

"Maybe we're in India," said Spencer hopefully. "Ask him where Jorhat is."

"Or Chabua," interposed Crozier.

McCallum, who had studied his *Pocket Guide to India* better than the others, tried both towns on the little man standing in front of them; but he got only a shake of the head from the linguist in the fur cap.

"What country?" asked McCallum. "India—or Tibet?"

"*Nay* India," replied the little man emphatically, pointing off in a direction which was south of Crozier. Stooping and placing his hand on the ground, he said simply, "Tibet." But the way he spoke it, it sounded like "Tobo" to the three Americans.

"Tibet," repeated McCallum for his comrades to hear.

"Did he say Tibet?" asked Crozier. "Sounded something like 'Tobo' to me."

"He didn't say Texas," replied McCallum. "Boy, you're a long way from Waco."

"Well, I'm not surprised," Crozier responded. "Couldn't be anywhere else, from what the Jorhat tower told us. We had a strong wind drift to the north, too."

"You mean we're really in Tibet, sir?" Spencer asked Crozier in incredulous tones. "Just like you thought, huh? I was hoping you were wrong."

"We're not on Long Island, boy," Crozier commented.

"Oh, my bare bottom," murmured Spencer in low tones. "I mean, it's really bare this time. *Tibet!*"

The little villager had remained politely quiet, his face inscrutable and his thoughts unfathomable, while they talked among themselves. When they gave him their attention again, he began to speak.

"Sinow Ulla," the villager said, placing his finger against his chest. "Sinow Ulla," he repeated. Touching his chest with his finger again, he repeated the words four or five times.

"He's trying to tell us his name," Crozier cried understandingly. Pointing to himself exactly as the villager had done, Crozier repeated his own name several times. McCallum and Spencer followed suit.

After the three airmen had repeated Sinow Ulla's name several times, and he theirs, they talked for fifteen or twenty minutes in broken Hindustani. Sinow Ulla told them he knew they were not British, but people like the British. He made them understand that the people of the village were friendly, but curious, and wanted them to visit their village. Finally, he took a few steps back toward his fellow villagers, smiled and motioned with his arm and hand for them to follow.[7]

"He wants us to go with him back to the town," McCallum said.

"It couldn't be worse than sleeping in the cold

[7] Tsewang Pemba, a Tibetan, on page 65 of his book, *Young Days in Tibet*, published by Jonathan Cape, London, 1957, tells of another American air crew which crashed in his country. They met villagers who clapped hands to drive out these people they considered to be devils from another world. One of the crew, mistaking the clapping for applause, turned to the others with a pleased grin and said, "These guys sure like us."

along the river," Crozier said. "Besides, we have to eat. Let's go with him."

"We're right behind you, Skipper," said McCallum. "If we have to, we can fire old Betsey again," he said, patting his service pistol. "We still have ammunition left."

They filed behind Sinow Ulla and joined the crowd of people without incident. Among them they found the man and woman who had led them to the village. As soon as McCallum spotted them, he remembered the word *laso* they had repeatedly used, and he attempted to get the meaning of it from Sinow Ulla. At his repetition of the word, Sinow Ulla seemed pleased that McCallum knew something of his native language.

"*Laso*?" he raised his voice with a smile. "*Haa. Jee*," he continued, giving two Hindustani equivalents of "yes."

McCallum turned to Crozier.

"The man and woman back there on the trail were only saying 'yes' to everything we said," he advised. "*Laso* means 'yes.' That's what Sinow Ulla says."

"Well I'll be damned," Crozier responded.

As they came back alongside the *chortens*, Crozier, seeing the swastikas again, stepped up and put the tip of his right forefinger on one.

"Swastika," he said, jabbing his finger forcefully on it several times.

"*Yundru*," replied Sinow Ulla.

"*Yundru, yundru*," Crozier repeated several times. "McCallum, do you know what that means?"

"Nope, Skipper, I'm afraid I don't," McCallum responded. "Guess it's some of Sinow Ulla's native lingo."[8]

[8] *Yundru* is Tibetan for "swastika."

They entered the village again, standing once more in the crooked, winding street, with the same big crowd of curious people around them, most of them dressed in a single sheepskin garment, with the wool next to their bodies. Sinow Ulla led the crewmen to a house, the entire village at their heels, where they passed through the courtyard of the home and paused under the second floor at the foot of a ladder. Before they climbed the rungs, Sinow Ulla attempted some language instruction.

"*Og khang*," he said, sweeping one hand over the general area below the foot of the ladder, in which they saw various stores and one animal. Then lifting a finger toward the area above the rungs, he said, "*Gong khang*."

"Guess he means 'downstairs' and 'upstairs,'" McCallum ventured.

"Or this is the barn and that's the house up there," Spencer guessed.[9]

Sinow Ulla led the way up the ladder, the airmen following, with as many of the villagers as could swarming up after them. As they walked into a room on the second floor, Crozier saw another swastika, this one over the door they entered.

Sinow Ulla placed his hand on McCallum's arm and led him back out to the top of the ladder.

"*Zeena*," he said, patting the top rung with the palm of his hand.

McCallum bowed, acknowledging politely his understanding.

"Hindustani for ladder," he muttered. "And I'm lucky to be able to climb it."

Sinow Ulla brought a butter lamp and lit it to

[9] *Og khang* and *gong khang* mean, respectively, "lower house" and "upper house."

dispel the darkness in the room, then he and all the villagers who had climbed up the ladder with them departed. The airmen were left alone for about an hour, after which Sinow Ulla returned with several other people. Sinow Ulla summoned them to follow him, and they came down the ladder after him. As they climbed down, the group of Tibetans laughed with great merriment, and thereafter Crozier noticed that people always laughed when they came down a ladder but not when they climbed up. Sinow Ulla soon led them into the presence of what they took to be a meeting of village officials, or older men, in a council room about twenty by thirty feet in dimension. The Tibetans showed the airmen to seats on rugs.

As they sat on the rugs, their hosts brought in hot goat milk, mutton, black barley bread, and some twisted fried cakes like they had seen in China, something like doughnuts. Then a woman brought a brick of tea. She was dressed in attire of red, yellow, green, and blue, with a cloth-covered arch on her hair, which was braided. She wore ornaments of silver, coral, and turquoise on her head and bosom and around her waist. She brewed some of the leaves and twigs of tea in a large cauldron, placing soda in the water, then another woman, more commonly dressed, in goatskin or sheepskin, brought in a tall, tubelike churn of polished wood. The first woman took the boiled tea, poured it in the churn with a brass dipper, then added salt and butter. The second woman then agitated the mixture with a dasher, on the bottom of which was a pad, somewhat like the plunger on a pump. After churning it awhile, she poured it into a teapot.

The three men ate and drank with relish. The

tea was bitter to their taste, but since they were hungry men, it warmed not only their stomachs but also their hearts. The tea was somewhat milky in appearance, just as tea served in the Western style with cream, the melted butter coming to the top. The Tibetans blew back the butter as they drank. Later, the Americans were to joke a lot about yak-butter tea, saying that just the right pinch of yak dung brought out the flavor. The Tibetans skillfully rolled barley flour into balls of dough in their tea bowls, mixing it with the tea, and then eating the doughy balls. The airmen didn't have too much luck when they tried to knead the flour neatly, as the Tibetans did.

While they ate, the village elders warmed themselves around a big brass brazier full of burning yak dung. Even though the room was blackened with smoke from the fire, the place looked like a palace to the airmen. There were warmth, food, and friendly people here. With the temperature around five degrees below zero, and with little or no wood to burn, the three men grew to understand why yak dung in Tibet is more valuable than money.

When they finished eating, Sinow Ulla approached them and began trying again to converse with them in his limited knowledge of Hindustani.

McCallum took the lead in repeating their story several times, but he and Sinow Ulla had a difficult time understanding one another. McCallum found that Sinow Ulla was a merchant in Tsetang and that he had made a trip to India as a trader over a caravan route fifteen or twenty years before, where he had picked up some of the language. Sinow Ulla made the airmen understand that they were staying in his home.

Uppermost in the thoughts of Crozier was the fate of Parram and Huffman, and he told McCallum to ask the assembled officials through Sinow Ulla to send out searchers for the missing men. Crozier wanted them to go into nearby villages and other inhabited places, if there were any, as well as comb the countryside. After a great deal of time and effort, the Tibetans understood what he wanted: to send searchers with a message he would write. When the friendly elders had agreed, Crozier got out his notebook.

"We are in the village of Tsetang," he scribbled. "Join us here. We are all in Tibet, God knows how. Keep your chin up."

The village assembly broke up quickly after this, and Sinow Ulla led the airmen away to his home for the night. A crowd outside the assembly room followed them, and after the three were shown to the room in which they would sleep, some of the people tried to come in; but Sinow Ulla wouldn't let them. In spite of this, heads full of curiosity were stuck in the door when the owner's back was turned.

The fliers found a feather mattress on the floor and plenty of wool quilts and feather comforters for cover, the comforters somewhat like the ones they had in the Air Force. The quilts were more like thick, deep-pile rugs than quilts. The three men were to learn that the average man did not have these quilts, as they were hard to weave, and therefore, expensive. The quilts established Sinow Ulla as a man of greater wealth than most of his fellow villagers.

There was a small brass vessel of smoking, smoldering yak dung, a little blue blaze from it now and

then throwing grotesque shadows on the walls. They pulled off their shoes and went to bed. In spite of the smoke in the room, the warmth lulled them quickly to a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER FIVE

IT WAS DAYLIGHT THE NEXT MORNING when Crozier, Spencer, and McCallum awoke to find five or six people crowded into the door of their room watching the performance of sleep given by these strange foreigners, the first Americans ever to come to their remote village on top of the world.

The three crewmen, especially Spencer, later became annoyed by the lack of privacy and the constant attention the villagers paid them. Except for Sinow Ulla, these Tibetans had never seen a Western man before, and none had ever seen an airplane. They simply did not believe anyone as young as these men could be going about in flying machines so far from home. To them, these foreigners were only boys because in their country a man is considered a boy until his father dies. They treated Spencer practically like a baby.

Shortly after the three awoke, Sinow Ulla, after driving away watching villagers, brought food for breakfast, including ample amounts of scalding butter tea. The airmen ate heartily everything placed before them.

After breakfast, Sinow Ulla came in with Tibetan boots made to fit either foot, fox-fur cloaks, and fur-lined caps for his guests' protection against the cold. The airmen learned they sometimes had to shed part of these garments in the sun, as they were constantly reminded by experience that it could be very cold in the shade and extremely hot in open sunlight. The

Tibetans often removed a sleeve and left a shoulder bare.

McCallum again talked with Sinow Ulla and found he knew the whereabouts of the plane wreckage. It had fallen into the edge of the nearby Tsangpo River. The airmen discovered that Lhasa, the capital, was about forty-five or fifty miles away, if they could fly; but it was perhaps twice that far by trail. Crozier realized now that the lights of the town they had seen from the air a short while before they jumped was the fabled, forbidden city.

After Sinow Ulla served breakfast and departed, McCallum spoke urgently on a subject which had come to his mind since eating.

"Wonder if they've got a latrine around here," he said to Crozier.

"If they have, we wouldn't know where it is, or how to ask about it," Crozier replied. "Either wait and ask your host, or hunt some bushes." He grinned. "Bushes seem scarce in this country."

McCallum headed out of the second-story room and down the ladder to the courtyard below, where some of the villagers joined him and went tagging along at his heels.

Crozier and Spencer climbed down the ladder soon after McCallum left to get some fresh air in the courtyard. They had not spoken more than two dozen words in fifteen minutes, it seemed, when McCallum strode back inside the yard.

"Well, this is really something," McCallum complained in irritated tones. "I headed for that clump of stunted trees we passed down by the river last night, and half the damned village followed me. They stood around watching, women right there

with the men. Hell, I was afraid to pull my pants down under the circumstances."

Crozier and Spencer roared with laughter, some villagers who had gathered joining in the fun, even though they had no inkling of the true difficulties of McCallum.

"It's a long time till dark," Crozier reminded McCallum between laughs. "Looks as if you'll have to wait till then, or put on a public performance."

This was their strongest initiation yet into a new kind of society, one in which nearly every act and thought was public. But the villagers were kind, even if they were ragged, dirty, and overly curious. They shared their coarse food gladly, even joyfully. They laughed and poked their inquisitive noses into their guests' most personal affairs. Everyone seemed to enjoy life under the high, cold sky and laughed in the face of a bitter, hard existence.

The magic of the Tibetan sun was brought home to the downed fliers as they stood in the courtyard among the crowd. Out on the edge of the gathering, sitting in the sunlight, was a little naked child playing in the dirt, although the temperature was fifteen degrees below zero. The high altitude, the thin, dry atmosphere, and the extremely direct rays of the sun were counteracting the cold. McCallum pointed to the baby.

"I don't want to hear any more complaining out of you sissies," he said.

That afternoon, about two o'clock, Huffman walked into Tsetang in the company of the villager of Dranang who had befriended him, fed him, and furnished him a bed in which to sleep the night before. Huffman had arisen at dawn that morning

and had walked, with his broken shoulder, the seventeen miles eastward along the banks of the Tsangpo. Before Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer could rush at him with slaps and hugs of welcome, Huffman shouted:

"Careful, everybody. I think my shoulder is broken." Then he added, "Broken or not, I'm really glad to be here. It's sure good to see you, sir," he said quietly to Crozier.

"Forget the 'sir,' " Crozier replied. "We'll all be calling each other worse than that by the time we get out of here. What's this about a broken shoulder? We'll have to examine that. God knows what we can do about it. There's no doctor here, and probably not one in maybe hundreds of miles. How did it happen?"

"Happened when I opened the 'chute," Huffman replied. "I was falling head down when it snapped open, and all the weight of my fall was stopped on my shoulder. It feels better when I don't move around so much."

"Have you seen Parram?" Crozier asked.

"No, sir," replied Huffman. "I haven't seen him or heard of him. Haven't you found him?"

"No," Crozier replied. "Neither you nor he ever answered our calls."

Huffman started to tell the pilot about his descent into the cavity in the mountainside as they entered Sinow Ulla's courtyard, but Crozier interrupted before he could speak.

"Let's get in the house, man, and look at that shoulder," the pilot urged. "Can you climb a ladder?"

"I believe so, sir," replied Huffman with understatement.

Crozier frowned as they climbed to the upper part of Sinow Ulla's house.

"One more of the crew is found," he mused, "but he's got a broken shoulder. And no word from the remaining one."

Crozier didn't want to think about starting back to India until everyone was accounted for.

Upstairs, while they were looking at Huffman's shoulder, they talked. After examining the break, they put his arm in a sling, Huffman wincing from pain as they did so.

"Did you get my note?" Crozier asked.

"Yes, sir," Huffman replied. "A runner came last night. This guy came into the village with it long after I was asleep. We waited till this morning to get started."

"Well, tell us what happened to you," Crozier said eagerly, as if he couldn't wait to hear what Huffman had to say.

"Well, sir," Huffman began, "next morning after daylight, I heard all of you yelling—"

Crozier interrupted him.

"Heard us? Then why didn't you answer?"

"I did," Huffman replied. "But apparently you never heard me."

"Were you hurt so you couldn't walk toward us?" Crozier asked.

"Oh, I could walk, all right," Huffman responded, "but I was having a little trouble walking straight up. I was down in a deep hole."

"What kind of hole?" Spencer, who had remained quiet until that time, asked.

"Listen, son," Huffman said tartly, "I'll fill you in on the details as I go along."

They all laughed, even Huffman, despite his painful shoulder.

"I fell into the hole when I made the jump," Huffman recounted. "It was forty or fifty feet deep. I could hear all of you yelling—at least I thought I heard three—but you couldn't hear me. It seemed I was right in the middle of everybody. I heard all of you say you'd meet at the river.

"I managed to climb out in the afternoon, got down to the river just before dark, and saw your tracks. I missed you, and reached the village where I stayed a long while after dark. They gave me a kind of parched cereal or flour and tea, and I gave them some of the nylon from my 'chute. It was just a gesture on my part. They were eager and happy to feed me for free. Nylon comes in handy at times, but you sure can't eat it."

Huffman paused.

"The natives sure treated me swell in the village," he continued. "They fed me and gave me a warm place to sleep, or as warm as you can find in this God-forsaken country."

"Now, now," cautioned McCallum. "This country isn't God-forsaken. They have more gods than we do, from what I hear."

"How in the hell will we ever get out of here?" Huffman wondered aloud to all of them.

"A good question, a good question," Crozier replied. "What else happened to you?"

"Well, nothing much," Huffman said. "I gave them my jungle knife to show them I was friendly. Later that night, when I was getting ready for some much-needed sack time, I found my knife under my pillow. That sure meant a lot to me. It was their way of telling me they were my friends. I can't

think of a better way they could have done it, can you, sir?"

"No, I can't, Huffman," Crozier replied. "If they ever get stranded in Texas, I'll buy them all the knives in Waco. Might not be enough to go around in my old hometown of West."

They all fell silent for a few minutes. Huffman walked over to the kettle of smoldering yak dung and rubbed his hands close to the heat.

"I'd give five bucks for a smoke," he said.

About that time, Sinow Ulla came into the room, and McCallum attempted to converse with him. He asked him about tobacco and cigarettes, with no idea that he might have some in Tsetang. Sinow Ulla left and was back almost immediately with four packages of cigarettes called Guinea Golds, the only cigarettes they ever found in Tibet outside Lhasa. He had acquired these on his trading trip to India fifteen or twenty years before. The cigarettes were dry as dust, and when they held them in perpendicular fashion, most of the tobacco fell out of the paper wrappers.

The airmen lit a cigarette apiece from the yak-dung fire, the old paper and tobacco almost flaring up, they were so dry. The smoke was the next thing to inhaling dust—but to the airmen, these cigarettes were certainly better than nothing.

"Makes me think of a guy I was talking to in Jorhat before we left for Kunming," Spencer said. "He was stationed up in Sind somewhere at a place called Sukkur Depot. He said it was so dry there in the desert you couldn't smoke a cigar—you burned it or exploded it, according to the weather."

Seeing that the cigarettes made such a hit with

his guests, and since his regular customers had never adopted the custom of the outside world, Sinow Ulla later let the airmen have his entire stock.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DAY AFTER HUFFMAN ARRIVED, the noise and babel of a big crowd welled up from Sinow Ulla's courtyard, and Crozier, going outside to investigate, found Parram had arrived in the company of several Tibetans, who had brought him in on a crude sled. Crozier yelled for the others, and they gathered around Parram as he sat on the ground, looking bedraggled and gaunt. After finding his feet were frostbitten, they removed his shoes.

Getting him inside quickly, they massaged his feet gently in the areas near the frostbite to stimulate circulation. Sinow Ulla brought cup after cup of yak-butter tea, which they poured down his throat, and then they took him to the feather mattress and put warm covers over him. They decided it would be harmful to place his feet too close to the dung fire; they thought his feet should warm up gradually. They would let him toast his feet later, after his temperature had gone up. They brought wet cloths, no warmer than room temperature, and applied them to his feet, then massaged his feet again for an hour or two until the circulation returned. Later, several of Parram's toenails fell off.

Parram told them how, when the searching Tibetans had found him within a stone's throw of the top of the mountain, he was no longer able even to crawl. The men of the searching party, when they discovered him, made the sled on which they pulled

him when the terrain permitted. At other times, he half walked and they half carried him.

"I thought my end had come," he told Crozier.

"I'm sure glad you're here," Crozier said in relieved tones.

The big pilot grinned broadly as new hope and thankfulness welled up within him. The biggest weight was off his mind. His crew was alive and together. He could concentrate now on getting back to India.

Later in the afternoon, about dusk, Sinow Ulla informed them they would meet again in the council room the next morning. Crozier was anxious to start some action at the meeting toward their getting out of Tibet.

After night fell, the question of a latrine came up again, and Crozier advised them that the cover of darkness and the great outside world made it a simple problem. All except Crozier and Parram headed for the clump of tamarisk trees McCallum had gone to earlier that day, sneaking out when they thought the villagers were unaware. But before they got there, most of the population of Tsetang was right behind them—men, women, and children.

On arrival at the grove, they decided they must perform their rites, and they did so while their audience watched in an expectant circle, some of the viewers holding lighted lanterns so they could see better. Crozier laughed himself to sleep when his comrades returned, but he later was the cynosure of all slanted eyes under similar circumstances. The villagers followed all of them repeatedly on these necessary relief journeys.

Next day, they were relieved in a double sense

when Sinow Ulla showed them the arrangement for such matters, definitely a better one, out of the cold wind.

It happened when McCallum again decided to try out some of his pocket-guide Hindustani on Sinow Ulla.

"*Tateeghar kahaa hai?*" he asked.

"*Kamra,*" responded Sinow Ulla immediately. He led McCallum straight to a room.[1]

It was a little room four to six feet square on the second story which had a hole cut in the floor. Down on the ground, in back of the courtyard or patio, this area was completely walled off. McCallum returned to the others with joyful news of the discovery.

Later that morning, while they were waiting to go to the council room, everything was quiet when Parram suddenly spoke.

"Say, Huffman," he said, "why don't you tell them about the girl you were telling me about last night?"

Parram was lying on the floor next to the pan of yak dung, which smoldered mostly, but now and then burned with a scarce, lambent flame. His comrades had given him their socks to wear, as he was unable to put on his shoes or Tibetan boots because of his frostbitten feet.

Huffman, leaning against the wall with his good shoulder, looked embarrassed.

"Oh, that," he commented.

"Well, tell them," Parram insisted. Right then he looked as if his feet were not bothering him much. He had a twinkle in his eyes.

[1] "Where is a toilet?" McCallum asks, and Sinow Ulla replies with the Hindustani word meaning "room."

"It wasn't anything," Huffman said in halting syllables and slightly irritated tones. "Just that old man who let me sleep in his house at the village I stayed in. He kept staring at me after I'd gone to bed. He left and came back leading one of his wives —or maybe it was his daughter—by the arm, brought her to the bed, and sort of motioned me to move over."

"What else?" Parram asked.

Huffman scowled as he looked down at his scuffed, broken Air Force shoes.

"That's all," he said in tones of finality. "I acted sick—and brother, I didn't have to be a very good actor." Then, to show his regard and respect for the people who had befriended him, he added: "These Tibet people sure have hospitality."

About an hour later, the five Americans were summoned by Sinow Ulla to the council room which Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer had visited on their first night in the village. The five airmen were placed on five rugs at one end of the building, where they sat for at least half an hour before anyone said anything. Many more people were in the council room than had been there on the previous occasion. With the passing of two or three days, news of the presence of these never-before-seen foreigners spread to the surrounding country. Nearby Tibetan officials and monks were in the room. Some had on bright yellow cloaks; others were dressed in fur-lined maroon robes. Most of the people, just like the villagers of Tsetang, were full of curiosity about these foreign airmen, walking around them and gaping; but not all of them. Some, who wore long turquoise pendants in one ear and monks with short-cropped hair,

had too much dignity and far too patrician a manner to circle around the five men and gaze and stare rudely. These men appeared detached and impassive.

Some of the men wore their hair twisted into little knots on top of their heads, in the knots bone and jeweled ornaments, and on their heads they wore hats which looked like cones a yard high.

The airmen, on their rugs, sat facing some of the Tibetans, who occupied a tablelike platform a foot or two above the floor, a canopy over their heads. There was a small laquered table between the five Americans and the Tibetans, on which rested jade-green teacups for the Tibetans and white China ones for the crewmen. Some of the men on the dais were dressed in red silk, the robes having a long, lapel-like trim of blue, and around their necks hung little silver boxes. Low cushions were placed along the remaining three sides of the room, near the walls.

At a word from a venerable old monk opposite Crozier, everyone took seats on the cushions, cross-legged fashion, some of them pulling large wooden bowls from their robes. Young boy monks with short crew-style haircuts brought in steaming pots of butter tea, serving first the Tibetans on the platform, second the Americans, and last the men on the low cushions. The five crewmen and the Tibetans in front of them removed lids of silver and brass from their cups when the boys approached to pour the tea. Those with the wooden bowls drank their tea from them, the boys keeping busy constantly replenishing the bitter, salty beverage.

The old monk who had bade everyone be seatel now began to talk, and another man began to record proceedings on chalk-covered boards with a bamboo

writing instrument which was tipped with metal somewhat like a stylus pen. The pen removed the chalk where he wrote on the boards.

Some of the officials and monks who had come to see the five strange flying men were, without a doubt, very important people to the inhabitants of Tsetang because, as the Americans observed later, the villagers stepped aside when the visitors passed, sucking in their breath and sticking out their tongues, both signs of respect by a Tibetan for his betters. To show the airmen they wished them well, both visiting dignitaries and local people brought eggs, mostly bad, dried mutton, and other gifts. The monks were from nearby Samye Monastery, the oldest in Tibet, and also from other lamaseries. But the fliers had no idea where they were from, and at that time didn't know a lama from a layman.

After the old lama finished speaking, the five fliers went over their story many times and for several hours, Sinow Ulla doing the best he could to communicate with McCallum in Hindustani. Crozier wanted to try floating down the Tsangpo, but he couldn't make himself understood. At last, Samye Monastery decided to send a messenger to Lhasa for instructions as to what to do, which was a six-day round trip.

Sinow Ulla made McCallum understand that a messenger was to be sent to Lhasa for instructions.

"You'd better send a message with him, Chief," McCallum advised Crozier. "Ask somebody to get word out to the Air Force that we're all alive if you can."

Crozier wrote the message, advising of the crash and the location and condition of the members of the

crew, and asked that it be sent to India by the fastest means possible. He turned it over to Sinow Ulla.

Through Sinow Ulla, the five tried to make the assembled people understand the war they were fighting. They found the Tibetans, living in their high, grand isolation, knew little or nothing of the world conflict. The people were only slightly curious about the war, and the airmen believed they didn't fully understand. At least, the five decided later, the villagers of Tsetang had no lasting interest in the subject.

"This is the damnedest country I've ever seen," Huffman remarked a day or two later. "They don't know there's a war on and they don't give a hoot."

While the fliers were waiting for the messenger to get to Lhasa and back, they were encouraged in their hopes of returning to India by monks, officials, and others who came to visit them, or at least that is what they understood, based on the limited communication between Sinow Ulla and McCallum.

"I guess we ought to be thankful that we're all alive," Crozier commented. "When we do get back to India—if we ever do—it'll be almost like getting back Stateside."

In a day or so, with the coming of another traveler, who looked like a Buddha in his bright yellow robe, encouragement turned to disappointment. Revealing his good nature and kind heart, this monk seemed pained to disagree with them on anything; but chances for a trip back to India did not seem good to him. He politely served them canned English cakes and tea, then departed. According to Sinow Ulla, he had come from many miles away, farther than their other visitors.

After this human image of the great god Gautama took his leave, the airmen were discussing his visit.

"Looked like those statues of Buddha I've seen in India," Crozier said.

"I don't know about Buddha," Spencer said. "He looked like something sitting on something I've seen in India or China, I don't know which."

Next day, their dejection turned to rejoicing, and then, just as quickly, they were plunged into an even deeper gloom. They found their fame had spread even farther. A moody Bhutanese monk rode into Tsetang from more than a hundred miles away. Spreading a tent, he invited the airmen to come to see him. Their rejoicing knew no bounds when he greeted them in English from the spreading shelter of a colorful canopy.

"I bid you welcome to my tent," he addressed them. "I hope you will honor me by sitting on my worn carpets and partaking of my poor food."

The fliers accepted his invitation, questions tumbling out of their mouths as they politely ate barley flour mixed with butter tea. The monk told them he had departed from a pilgrimage to come and see them, but he could offer no hope himself of their getting back to India.

"Robbers rove through the mountains," he told them. "You would need a company of soldiers to defend you if you expected to get to the border alive. Besides, the high passes may be covered with snow this time of year. Cold winds sweep over the mountains. You would need horses and yaks. You could buy food and fuel, but word would have to be sent ahead for people to prepare for you. Lhasa will have to arrange the way."

Crozier told him about his idea of floating down the Tsangpo to India in some of the yak-hide boats he had seen on the river. These river-worthy coracles seemed almost impossible to tip over in the water, from what Crozier had seen of them near Tsetang.

"Some have tried it and have never been heard of again," the monk said. "Indeed, it is regrettable. One can not go by the river, neither over the mountains anywhere he chooses. Indeed, regrettable. You will have to go by the Lhasa trade route. Regrettable, indeed."

Time passed, and on the tenth day after Crozier, McCallum, and Spencer arrived at Tsetang, which was December 12, a tall, 180-pound, pot-bellied individual who introduced himself as Sahib Rai Bahadur Bo appeared in the village. He walked into the house of Sinow Ulla quietly, almost like a jinni coming from the brass bowl of smoking yak dung. But his quiet entrance was a delusion, for it later turned out that he made more noise than anyone who came to visit the Americans. An Indian medical doctor with no degree, he came from the British mission in Lhasa, announcing that he would take charge of the crew's affairs. Right away, Crozier, because of Sahib Rai Bo's drooping moustache and hawklike, copper-bronzed face, put him down as looking like the Mexican bandit, Pancho Villa.

The following morning, official messengers from the Tibetan government at Lhasa appeared in the village, and the airmen were impressed with the influence and official weight their visitors threw around the countryside. The physician from the

British mission, whom Crozier and the crew were calling "Doc" Bo by then, ranted and raved at the local populace, pounding his silver-topped cane for emphasis on the floor of Sinow Ulla's house. He demanded the best of food for the Americans and announced he was going to take them to Lhasa.

Crozier became concerned at Doc Bo's high-handed behavior toward the villagers. As leader, he told McCallum to bring Sinow Ulla and Doc Bo together for a talk with all of them.

"Doc's going to have to simmer down," Crozier told McCallum. "He's acting like a *burra* sahib, or a babu.[2] These people have been good to us, and I won't have them mistreated. They like us, and this guy's ruining it all."

McCallum got everyone together, and Crozier explained to Doc Bo that the people of the village had warmed him and his crew when they were cold, fed them when they were hungry, and looked for Parram when he was helpless and half-frozen on the mountain.

"I demand respect for them," he told Doc. "Let's don't shout at them. Let's ask them to do things quietly."

Sinow Ulla understood, and Doc Bo reduced his noise level and acquired a calmer mood.

The official representatives of the Lhasa government went to work, and soon enough horses and supplies were ready in Tsetang. Doc Bo went busily

[2] The term *burra* sahib, as used by Americans in India during World War II, was synonymous with the expression "big shot." Crozier used the Anglicized Hindustani word "babu" contemptuously, conveying the thought that he considered Doc semiliterate, with little or no understanding of proper conduct toward those considered to be on a lower social plane. The English often use "babu" disparagingly, meaning that the person referred to is half-Anglicized. A Hindu sweeper might apply the term to a Hindu clerk who can speak or write English. As a Hindu word, "babu" means "gentleman."

about, smiling and rubbing his palms together, telling Crozier that soon they would be going over Gokar Pass, nearly twenty thousand feet high, to Lhasa, the fabled Vatican of Lamaism, in its thirteen-thousand-foot valley, where, he said, it seldom snowed.

Doc seemed in a hurry to shake the dust of Tsetang off his shoes. He said one of the representatives of the Lhasa government was especially anxious to return as quickly as possible.

"He must return soon to Lhasa," Doc confided, "because his joint brother wishes to go on a long journey, and his joint brother can not start until he returns."

"His joint brother," Crozier repeated. "Just what kind of brother is a joint brother?"

"He is not really his brother at all," Doc replied.

"Not his brother!" Crozier exclaimed. "Then, what is he?"

"I mean, they each have the same wife," Doc explained.

"The same wife!" Crozier lifted his voice in amazement. "Do they live happily?"

"Oh, yes," Doc said in matter-of-fact tones. "They have much respect for each other in the family."

Crozier had a hard time getting Doc to stop long enough to look at Huffman's shoulder, Parram's feet, and Spencer's cut chin. When he did, Doc did little or nothing about them. Whether he didn't know what to do, didn't care what he did, or did not have the necessary medical supplies, Crozier was at a loss to understand. Crozier knew that X-ray equipment was necessary in the case of Huffman's shoulder. At any rate, Crozier thought Doc Bo's examinations were too short and perfunctory.

The day before they left for Lhasa, Crozier asked Doc Bo to have Sinow Ulla present them with a bill for all the expense they had caused him. Sinow Ulla brought several sheets of long, narrow paper on which characters of the Tibetan alphabet had been inscribed with a bamboo stylus.

"In Lhasa," said Doc, "it shall be put into English."

Also, the day before they left, they heard that their crashed plane was on the route out of Tsetang, and Doc Bo told them they would be able to see it when they took to the trail on their horses.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEXT MORNING, THE PEOPLE OF THE village turned out to say farewell to the airmen, all of them walking down to the river ferry with the caravan, a quarter to a half a mile away, to see the flying foreigners off. There were nine in the caravan, the five Americans, Doc Bo, the two government messengers from Lhasa, and Sinow Ulla, who decided to go with them. The villagers gave their parting guests robes of thick fur, boots lined with fur, and wool blankets, all made in Tsetang. The people gave each of the airmen some serge cloth and scarves, the latter woven from wood fiber, but soft and smooth as silk. These white *khatas* or *chadags* fluttered in the cold wind as the five fliers accepted them with solemn faces. Before they got out of Tibet, Crozier and his crew found the giving of scarves was a social custom as universal as shaking hands in America.

They led their horses through the streets, intending to mount outside the gate for the ride down to the river. When they were just beyond the village, they found some of the women standing beside the trail with bowls of *chang*, or barley beer, in their right hands, and plates of *tsamba*, or parched barley flour, in their left hands. Others, who held china cups, poured some of the *chang* into them and added a pinch of the *tsamba* with their fingers. They passed the cups to the airmen with friendly syllables.

"What are they saying?" Crozier asked Doc Bo as he took his cup and prepared to drink.

"They say," Doc answered, " 'We hope to bring you more when you return again some day.' "

"Tell them we hope to come back," Crozier told Doc, "and that we shall never forget them and their kindness."

Some of the men held stirrups as the riders mounted. All—men, women and children—followed them as they rode to the river, shouting, "*Kale phebe, kale phebe,*" to the departing Americans.

"*Kale phebe, kale phebe*!" Crozier repeated slowly to Doc, who rode near him. "What does that mean?"

" 'Proceed slowly,' " replied Doc. " 'Go slowly if you wish to return.' "

"That's interesting," Crozier observed. "In America, we have a similar saying when friends part from one another. 'Take it easy.' "

As they approached the mighty Tsangpo through soft sand, they heard lusty singing coming out of the cold fog from toward the river. Boatmen and a ferry were coming for them from the other side, at least half a mile away over sluggish current. As they rode up to the edge of the icy water, the big ferry and several yak-hide boats loomed like unsubstantial, gathering shadows from out of the wall of fog above the river, the boatmen still singing with hearty gusto.

While they prepared to cross, the assembled villagers began shouting something over and over again. Doc Bo told Crozier the people wanted to hear an American song.

"We better not sing 'Off We Go Into the Wild Blue Yonder,' " McCallum said with a chuckle.

"You can say that again," Crozier responded. "Flying's lost face around here."

"We ought to sing 'The Star-Spangled Banner,' "

Spencer said with a grin, "but that won't do. I don't know all the words, and if I did, I couldn't hit the high notes."

They decided they knew "God Bless America," so they sang two verses, after which the villagers sent up cheer after cheer. The people began repeating something else, and Doc Bo told Crozier they wanted the American leader to make a farewell talk.

Crozier tried to tell them briefly something of America and why his country was in the war. He told them America would repay them for their kindness.

"The people of America," he concluded, "even though they repay you, will always be indebted to you. We hope some day you will come to America and let us pay as much of our debt as we can."

Doc Bo interpreted Crozier's words, the villagers bowing and sticking out their tongues as a final mark of respect.

The men of the caravan loaded the horses onto the ferry, some following the animals aboard, while others got into yak-hide boats. As the fog swallowed them up, the Tsetang villagers on the bank faded quickly from view.

On the north bank of the river, they turned west from the Gerba Ferry Camp, a clean sand beach where travelers could spend the night, and continued for about ten miles before turning up a valley which narrowed to a point five or six miles north. It was on the stretch of trail along the Tsangpo that they found the wreckage of their plane in the edge of the water and ice.[1]

[1] Lowell Thomas, Jr., writes in *The Silent War in Tibet* that ". . . the plane crashed into a mountainside." This is in error. Crozier saw it in the river just as he had been told he would, with some of the wreckage scattered along the banks. (From *The Silent War in*

They saw long lines of Tibetans moving up the side of a mountain like ants with sections and parts of the big cargo plane. Doc Bo told them that he had found that people in the area would not approach the plane's wreckage for many days after the crash. Now, evidently, they had overcome their fear, timidity, or whatever had been holding them back. The airmen saw one fire-blackened engine, which had been hurled from the plane into shallow water, fastened solidly in a mass of ice, two blades of the propeller sticking up in the frosty air. Crozier counted at least a dozen Tibetans around the propeller blades trying in vain to pry them out of the vicelike grip of the ice.

"The ice isn't giving them as much trouble as the ton of engine on the other end," Crozier remarked to McCallum as they rode along.

Spencer saw one of the Tibetans dragging away the plane's radio, and when it proved to be too much of a load for him, he took an ax and hacked it in two.

All along the river there was a range of hills back to the north of them as they proceeded west, with scattered groves of poplar and willow trees near the bank. The ground over which they rode was mostly sand hillocks, with high, rocky spurs now and then coming right down to the water's edge, causing the caravan to have to climb around them.

As they picked their way up above some of these, Crozier saw thousands of tiny fish skeletons beneath their horses' hooves. He wondered why, as he was sure the river would never rise that high, and the bones didn't look like fossils, being bleached white

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and free of sediment. He asked Doc Bo about it, but Doc had no explanation for it.

In places where the craggy hills came down close to the river, the airmen glimpsed, far up the heights, two or three small lamaseries as they rode along. At one spot, they rode past an old pile of masonry, evidently an imposing building in some past age, situated in a commanding position on a high, stony ledge. They moved across more sandy plain, past numerous little villages, to a bigger one Doc Bo called Dosho. Here they saw more poplar and willow groves, with a few nut and fruit trees around them.

A little beyond Dosho, they crossed a small tributary of the Tsangpo on ice, and five miles up the trail, a slightly bigger one, the streams coming down from the uplands to the north. About three miles farther on, they reigned their mounts out on the solid surface of a wider one. Safely across, they turned into this tributary valley to the north, along the left side of the ice-locked watercourse. They found the trail rather smooth going; it must have been alpine meadow in the summer, for now it was covered with thin, dead grass which rustled in the cold wind.

They soon took their last look at the Tsangpo, which flowed at the foot of a black sandy slope about two miles to the south. Stunted willows grew along the banks in the distance. Doc Bo pointed toward them.

"The Tibetan words mean 'mourning trees,' " he told Crozier.

"In America," Crozier replied, "we call them weeping willows."

"This is the land of the old Tibetan kings," Doc said. "The Tibetans believed in river gods. The son

of an old king was drowned in the river, and the angry old king ordered his subjects to beat the water with whips. His people feared the river gods, but also feared the king. They asked an oracle what to do, and the oracle persuaded the king not to do this thing, as the river gods would drown him, too. So the old king took his orders away."

The little caravan continued to ride over the black sand and through the sparse, dry grass, finally reaching the top of a low hill. Beyond it, the glittering domes of Samye, the oldest Buddhist monastery in Tibet, stood before them.

They looked down on a great collection of buildings and *chortens* of all sizes, both inside and outside an immense circular wall of masonry which must have been two miles in circumference, with gates opening in the four directions. The smaller monasteries they had seen so far were perched on mountainsides and high rocks, but this one was wholly in the valley. Large and small groves of trees grew inside and outside the compound, relieving the dry barrenness of the forlorn valley and eroded mountains, the latter rising amid the sand dunes to the south. They saw the biggest *chorten* they had seen so far; it towered far above the tallest building inside the compound, which looked as if it were five stories high. This immense circular monument, dark and domed, near the center of the area enclosed by the wall, must have been made from the black sands of the area, Crozier thought. Nearer where they sat astride their horses was a white *chorten* almost as large. Smaller ones were scattered here and there among the buildings of this clean, well-ordered community. Far off across the valley, isolated, away be-

yond the walls, was a single building, which seemed to be half buried in the drifting sands.

"It was from here," Doc Bo said to Crozier as he pointed below, "that messengers were sent to Lhasa to tell that you had come to Tsetang. They hurried for forty miles."

Crozier wondered if it were forty miles to Lhasa, or if the messengers had hurried only forty miles of the way. It seemed to him that Doc had told him earlier it was nearer a hundred miles from Tsetang to Lhasa, and Crozier thought they could have come no more than fifteen miles up to now. He decided to let the matter pass, the measurement of distance being what it is in the Oriental mind.

"We won't get there soon enough to suit me," he thought to himself as he felt the cold wind race through his whiskers, "no matter how short or long the distance."

He turned in his saddle toward Doc as they surveyed the great monastery below.

"What did you say the name of this place is?" he asked.

"Samye," replied Doc. "In English, it means 'Beyond Imagination.' "

Crozier laughed.

"That's funny," he said. "The place we're from is called 'Confusion Beyond Imagination'."[2]

Doc looked puzzled, but he said nothing.

"What do the monks do here?" Crozier asked Doc.

"The Tibetan people have much respect for what they do," Doc replied. "Many Tibetans believe the monks keep a large jar at Samye, and when a man

[2] Crozier referred to the American soldier's good-naturedly contemptuous term for the American China-Burma-India command in the Far East.

dies, the monks seal his breath in this jar where it can not escape."

It was Crozier's turn to look puzzled and say nothing.

They all took their last glance at Samye and rode on up the valley. As they went along the next few miles, the terrain grew more rough and rocky because the valley was becoming more narrow.

Every now and then Crozier had someone stop so he could look after Parram's frostbitten feet. Parram still could not wear shoes or boots, not even the woven woolen kind some of the Tibetans had. Parram had on his own socks and all his comrades', with a heavy blanket thrown around his feet. His toes were cold, sore, and tender, with lesions between them; but he insisted he was doing all right.

Later, as they rode along, they not only had to think about Parram's feet, but also were concerned about their own. They were not able to stay in the saddle without danger of frostbite, even though they had heavy, fur-lined boots, the best Sinow Ulla could get. All riders began walking and riding by turns, except Parram, and each time they walked, two of the crew went along on each side of Parram's horse, when the trail was wide enough, and massaged Parram's feet and legs. Walking stimulated circulation enough in their own feet to fend off the cold blight.

As they walked and rode along, they crossed literally hundreds of little ice-locked, spring-fed streams. Every ravine contained ice, and cold water seeped from under ledges and rocks. This country, it seemed to Crozier, had ten times as much flowing water as any he had ever been through, including all the Rocky Mountains of the American West.

Much of the time the trail was covered with ice

because of water seepage which had flowed down the track and frozen. The little streams all were frozen solid, except now and then there was some pressure flow to the top, which, in turn, soon froze, serving to thicken the ice and make it grow out of the banks of the streams. Sometimes the riders tried to go around such ice barriers, as they were dangerous. Once, one of the horses broke through and sank up to his knees, but a second layer of ice below caught him.

Toward the middle of the afternoon, they began a steep climb on a dangerous trail, which led them up three or four thousand feet above Tsangpo Valley. Then, long after reaching the higher elevation, they rode into the village of Chanda, which, as well as they could observe in the darkness, was built just like Tsetang—to repel the cold wind and bandit invaders. Most of Chanda's population, overcome with curiosity, came out in the night to meet them, following and staring, so that the smallest movements of these strange foreigners would not escape them. The fliers found a metal pan of yak dung inside the shelter, which had been lit before their arrival. More dried dung was stacked against the wall for their use.

Shortly after they arrived, two Chinese from the Chinese Commissioner's Office in Lhasa rode into Chanda to welcome them on behalf of the Director of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of the Chinese Central Government in the Tibetan capital. The two Chinese broke open five bottles of South African brandy before they ate their evening meal and made it known that these spirits were for all present.

"We wish to apologize for the scarcity of these

beverages," one of them said. "There is little in Lhasa. We know you are used to plenty in America. Therefore, please accept our humble apologies."

Crozier was somewhat concerned, as he thought the Chinese expected the members of the caravan to drink the five bottles that evening—and it looked to him as if each bottle's capacity was at least a fifth of a gallon.

The Chinese poured brandy for everyone before they ate their dinner of boiled mutton, toasted *tsamba* flour, and yak-butter tea. When dinner was over, they didn't let full stomachs or a possible difference in customs stand in the way of pouring more. Doc Bo didn't last long. He seemed to have a weak stomach. They put him to bed after the first two or three glasses.

Before Crozier went to bed, he decided that one of the Chinese, who was drinking most of the brandy, could hold more alcohol than anyone he had ever seen.

"This guy must have been brought up on a straight diet of saki in his youth," Crozier whispered to McCallum at an opportune moment.

"Yeah, *jing-bow* juice is the main course with him," McCallum agreed.[8]

When Crozier went to bed, he made a mental note of the evening's score: the five Americans had drunk two bottles, the two Chinese two bottles, and the fifth bottle, which had been nipped at by the Tibetans and Doc Bo, had some left in it.

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[8] The Chinese term *jing-bow* or *ching-pao* literally means "alarm" or "warning." Many Americans usually thought of it as meaning "air raid." The Chinese used the term in the expression *k'ung-hsi ching-pao*, meaning "air-raid alarm." Americans came to refer to all alcoholic beverages obtained from the Chinese as "*jing-bow* juice," meaning they had the same kick as an air raid.

"Well, we're thirty to thirty-five miles nearer Lhasa, I guess," Crozier thought wearily as he dropped off to sleep.

Despite the effects of the brandy, they were stirring early the next morning, for Doc Bo was now saying they had another thirty or thirty-five miles to go if they expected to get to the next village, Changtsu, by nightfall. And to say it was uphill most of the way was an understatement. Gokar Pass, the highest elevation between them and Lhasa, loomed up nearly twenty thousand feet high at least fifteen or twenty miles away. The pass was about six or seven thousand feet above the elevation of Chanda, the village they were in.

It was dark and long before dawn when they got out in the cold to saddle their horses. They had no pack animals to get together, as the only gear they possessed were packages of provisions for their midday lunch tied to the backs of their saddles. Most of the villagers were up to see them off, and quite a number of the curious started out following them, walking or trotting beside the airmen's horses, and staring up into their faces after daylight came. Some of them kept pace with the horses for nearly half the day before they turned back just short of Gokar Pass.

As they rode, the fliers let the long, flowing sleeves of their thick robes dangle down over their hands to keep out the cold. In Tibet, these long sleeves serve a dual purpose—to keep the hands warm and also to signify that the wearer doesn't have to earn a living with his hands. The Americans emulated their Tibetan comrades by cinching these *chupas* tightly

around their waists and carrying their personal effects inside, as the garments had no pockets.

"It puts a gut on a man," Crozier observed with sly pertinence, "but a man needs a lot of blubber in this climate."

Along about dawn, hours after they left Chanda, they came upon a group of Tibetans breaking camp. They were placing pads and pack racks on the backs of their animals, drinking tea, and trying to warm themselves near the smoldering heat of their dung campfire. Some were packing blankets and others were wrapping their fur-lined robes around them. The Tibetans kept piling bale after bale of goods on the back of a donkey that turned out not to be too stupid. When they exceeded his limit, he sat down rather quietly in protest—and then, when they removed a couple of boxes, he promptly got up again.

Farther away from the camp, other caravaneers were loudly rounding up straying yaks from the scanty grazing grounds.

"*Sho! Sho! Sho!*" they called insistently and effectively in vigorous, clarion tones, the words carrying far and wide and bounding along from high rock to high rock as echoes on the morning calm.[4]

A mile or so more up the trail, they ran into another stolid herd of the lumbering, awkward yaks loaded heavily with provisions, the lead animal wearing a collar of red wool and shells, from which a long red tassel swung in a rhythmic arc. The beasts, with their long hair and magnificently wide horns, reminded Crozier of American buffalo. The hair under their bellies almost dragged on the ground.

The yaks moved slowly, grazing around on the

[4] "Come! Come! Come!"

sparse grass—dead, dry hay which few animals would notice except these hardy cattle. Swarthy muleteers riding with the animals lashed lazily at them with extremely long thongs of leather attached to stubby, short stocks which looked like bamboo. Leather bands held these whips on their wrists when they needed a free hand for something else. The yak herders dejectedly threw rocks and pebbles at the yaks, whistling and shouting jovially, much as an American muleskinner or cowboy would drive mules or cattle. The muleteers seemed to have recognized earlier in life that any effort to get their charges to move faster was doomed to failure at the outset but it was the accepted thing to keep trying. Doc Bo told Crozier that the yaks would not make more than ten or twelve miles a day.

"He grazes as he goes," Doc said, "because he gets no feed other than that."

The beasts had sad eyes and haggard expressions, as if they carried their native mountains on their shoulders. Some of the high-piled loads seemed to approach the weight of the vast ranges, with boxes, bales, and sacks piled high on the yaks' backs. Around their mouths, as they slowly chewed their cuds, icicles formed from their frosty breath.

"First oxes with overcoats I've ever seen," Spencer shouted from his horse as the yaks passed.

In a short time the caravan was climbing, and it continued to climb dizzily toward the divide between them and Lhasa during the first half of the day. They plodded along single file on an almost vertical ledge, the horses continually stumbling along the edge of space. Often they dislodged rocks, which must have fallen a mile straight down before they came to rest, as they never heard them hit anything

solid after they went over the edge of the trail. A rising, bitter wind, dry and cold as the rocks around them, blew more and more savagely into their faces as they mounted higher toward the pass. This, coupled with the desolate, thin air of ever-increasing altitude, caused them to pause often and rest their horses, and now and then move forward wearily on foot. It became extreme, ceaseless effort to sit straight on their mounts; but they trudged heavily on, stiff and numb with the cold, always upward.

They found a lot of ice on the trail in this area because of frozen seepage, making the track twice as dangerous as it would otherwise have been. The ice sometimes flowed sluggishly over steep ledges in icicle form, and they had to dismount because they feared both they and their mounts would slide off the twisting trail into the voids below. None of this ice was caused by snow, rain, or sleet, as the air was extremely dry. All the ice on the trail was formed by flowing springs and ground-water seepage.

About eleven o'clock in the morning, when a faint winter sun came out and warmed them considerably, Doc Bo, riding at the head of the caravan, turned in his saddle and yelled to Crozier and his crewmen.

"Only one more mile to Gokar Pass."

"So what!" thought Crozier. "That's plenty when the mile's straight up."

Immediately thereafter, they reined their horses off the trail to eat their lunches at a good, roomy spot. Crozier was utterly grateful for the halt, as he felt he couldn't sit in the saddle another five minutes. He wanted to get off his horse, curl up quietly somewhere out of the wind, and go to sleep. After stopping their horses, they dismounted and sat lean-

ing back against some rocks in a place as much out of the wind as possible, eating their lunch of almost frozen yak tongue and *rotee*.[5] The yak-butter tea they brewed on the ground revived Crozier somewhat.

Finishing their hasty, miserable meal, they were soon back in the saddle, climbing up the steep trail toward the pass. Not five minutes later, Doc Bo twisted his head back from where he was riding at the head of the single-file column.

"Only one more mile to Gokar Pass," he shouted again.

"He's as mixed up as the guys who put out our highway mileage markers back home," Crozier thought. "That's what he said half a mile back."

They rode the horses two or three hundred yards and stopped to let them rest a minute before going on. The animals were not tired; they simply needed to get more oxygen in their blood, and letting them rest frequently was the only way to do it at the increasing altitude. The horses got their breaths back quickly.

From that stop till they reached the top of the pass, they halted their mounts for a minute at least every two to three hundred yards, letting them recover their wind before they urged them on up the steep track. Between stops, usually right after they moved out, Doc Bo would turn in the saddle and shout:

"Only one more mile to go."

He repeated the phrase constantly, over foot after foot of upward climb and what seemed mile after

[5] *Rotee* is the Hindustani word meaning "bread." The bread the crew had was black and hard.

mile of ascent. It got to be a laughing matter with the Americans.

"Just like a tongawallah in Delhi, or a Sikh taxi driver in Calcutta," Crozier remarked to McCallum. "They don't know where anything is, and if they do, they don't know how far it is."

By this time, they reached eighteen thousand feet. Crozier knew they were going on up to nearly twenty thousand, and he was afraid he or some of his comrades—perhaps all of them—might pass out, as he had been told in training that most people lose consciousness at twenty thousand feet above sea level unless oxygen is provided.

"Oh, well, I suppose the Tibetans can take care of us," he muttered to himself.

But as they climbed on above the eighteen-thousand-foot level, the Tibetans lost stamina and complained of severe headaches. The extreme altitude seemed to hurt them much more than the Americans, while below eighteen thousand, their endurance had far exceeded that of the air crew.

Doc Bo seemed to have a reserve of wind, at least enough left to shout frequently, "Only one more mile to go!"

Just about the time Crozier began to think Doc Bo would never admit to progress on that last mile to the top of the pass, and just as it seemed his lungs would burst, Doc Bo changed his phrase.

"Gokar Pass," he shouted.

They were on the pass, and they had ridden miles since Doc Bo had first said it was only one. It was not the first time Crozier had realized that Orientals are not very exact in their references to time and space.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon as Crozier

stood on the high pass and gazed at the world all around, beneath, and above him. Near him, the rugged earth fell away, bleak and bare, finally being swallowed up in a distant sea of indigo shadows. These melted gradually into dark ridges standing forlornly against the sky in the pale, fading winter sunshine. From the pass, a ridge ran along in a generally northeast and southwest line—and to the northeast, at what Crozier judged to be five or six miles distant, a giant, hoary peak, the top covered with ice and snow, lifted itself above the surrounding country. Crozier asked Doc Bo the name of the mountain and its altitude, but Doc knew neither. Later, Crozier looked at a World Aeronautical Chart and found the mountain, more than twenty-two thousand feet high, was not named on the map.

Doc Bo told Crozier the Tibetans' idea of Hell was a great icy mountain peak such as the one they could see. Crozier decided that the wind hitting them full in the face was straight from the demon who ruled the most infernal and diabolical altitude of them all.

No sooner were they on the pass than they approached a huge mound of stones, between the boulders long staffs, from which flapped ragged, wind-torn prayer flags. Doc Bo called the rocky heap a *mendong*, which he said was Tibetan for "many stones." When their Tibetan companions collected a few boulders and pitched them on the pile, Crozier wondered where they got the energy, as he was breathing heavily in his weakened state, like all the others. After throwing the rocks on the high stack, the Tibetans bowed reverently in all directions, shouting repeatedly and triumphantly, *"Lha gyalo! De tamche pham! Lha gyalo! De tamche pham!"*

"Who the hell are these jokers bowing to?" one of the men wondered.

"Some of the gods, I guess," Crozier said, a word at a time, between inhales and exhales of the oxygen-scarce air.

"What are they saying?" Crozier asked Doc.

"They say the gods have won and the demons have lost," Doc replied.[6]

"What the hell!" another of the men said. "We better give the horses credit. Gods, devils, and men had damned little to do with it."

Nevertheless, all the crew except footsore Parram followed custom, bowed, and tossed a small stone apiece on the cairn.

The two representatives of the Lhasa government and Doc Bo were soon urging the airmen to follow them quickly down from the pass, as the caravan still had a long way to go that day, and the steep way down the pass would have to be covered on foot by all of them except Parram, who could not walk on his injured feet. It took three men to get Parram, overcome by the altitude, back astride his horse.

Except for Parram, they went on foot down the pass in order to observe a Tibetan custom that men may not ride down a mountain, for the Tibetans say that a horse is not a horse unless he can walk up a mountain, and a man is not a man unless he can walk down.

As they trudged along in the afternoon, going down thousands of feet, the sun, even though it was low in the sky, was so hot in open places, they had to loosen their robes, and some of them removed

[6] The expression, *Lha gyalo*, has been translated into English by W. W. Rockhill, an authority on Tibet, as meaning, "God give me a hundred years."

them down to the waist. Then, as they walked into the shadows of overhanging rocks and slopes, they had to bundle up again. When dusk caught them, they were off the steep, downward grade from the pass, so they mounted their animals again. The blackness of night overtook them, but they plodded on, the creak of the saddles and the fall of the horses' hooves on the rocks being the only sounds they heard, as the wind had become still.

The trail had been hard enough in the light of day; now it was torture. Crozier wondered if anyone had traveled along it after dark before. Although they were down from the ledges and deep canyon walls above them, the trail was still slippery, narrow, and full of stones. They rode into rock overhangs, and once Parram was almost knocked off his pony. Every two or three hundred yards the horses stopped, and the men could only urge them on with the greatest effort. Sometimes, when the horses stopped to get their breaths, the men took turns in dismounting to look after Parram's frost-scarred feet, stumbling over the craggy, frozen soil to get to him. When they reached him, they massaged his legs to help restore the circulation.

Before the last rays of light faded, Crozier could tell he was on the trail by watching the gathering shadows on the back of McCallum, who was riding ahead of him. When the encroaching blackness completely veiled the copilot and his pony, Crozier couldn't even see the mane of his own horse's neck. The pilot's muscles were stiff, not only from sitting erect and from the cold, but also from anxiety and uneasiness, brought on by the darkness, which kept him on guard against a tumble from the saddle, or a stumble from his horse. More broken bones in the

crew were the last things he wanted. Once, when his pony stumbled, his heart almost leaped into his mouth.

At one point, Crozier realized all at once that he couldn't hear any saddle leather creaking except his own; neither were the hoofbeats of any of the ponies audible except his. He was momentarily horrified that he might have wandered off the trail and become separated from the caravan. Seemingly, without any control or conscious effort, he spontaneously called out:

"McCallum!"

From up ahead came McCallum's voice.

"Yeah? What is it, Chief?"

For a moment Crozier didn't reply.

"Wha' d' you want, Chief?" McCallum repeated in the darkness.

"Nothin', McCallum," Crozier finally answered. "I couldn't hear you. Can't see a thing in this damned darkness. Thought I might be off the trail. We'll break our necks before we get where we're going unless we have some luck."

McCallum must have halted briefly, for Crozier managed to glimpse his shape dimly again just before their horses scrambled themselves together on the trail. The collision made the two mounts nervous and they trembled as they started cautiously again down the track.

Crozier wanted nothing so much as to dismount and rest his tired bones beside any convenient rock. The cold helped to keep him awake. Although he cursed it, he realized the frigid air was a friend in disguise.

"It's a good thing it's cold," he muttered into his Air Force jacket and Tibetan robe.

Suddenly, from up ahead, he heard Doc Bo shout that the village where they would stop for the night was near.

"Thank God," he heard one of the men mumble. They were all grateful for Doc's words.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BLACK NIGHT AND ICY, DEATHLIKE cold had enveloped them for hours when they rode into Changtsu, the last village they would stay in before reaching Lhasa. The altitude was about the same as Chanda, the first village they had stopped at on their journey from Tsetang. Changtsu was a general replica of Chanda and Tsetang. In it they saw the same harsh poverty they had seen before; but the people, despite it all, welcomed them with the same good nature, laughter, and curiosity as had the other villagers.

The Tibetans with the little caravan of weary travelers talked briefly to the headman of the village, and as a result, they were quartered in the headman's house and allowed the use of his kitchen. The two Chinese, with no more African brandy to keep them occupied, left immediately to see if they could buy *chang* from some of the villagers.

"Cold and hunger has to wait on thirst in the case of those boys," Crozier remarked to McCallum when Doc Bo told them the Chinese were out looking for something to drink.

Sinow Ulla put some yak meat on to boil in the smoke-blackened kitchen and brewed a big cauldron of the salty yak-butter tea. This, with some of the black *rotee* they had brought along, would be their supper. They found plenty of ladles and pans hanging on the walls of the kitchen, one side of which was a panel of finely carved wood, but now so black

with soot it had lost whatever beauty it might have had originally.

By the time they had the tea churned, the Chinese were back with a paunchy, glazed crock holding about two gallons of the barley beer. One of them put the coarse, earthen jar on the floor and held it with both hands while the other pried industriously at the wide mouth with a miniature grubbing hoe. When the lid suddenly flew up and landed on the floor with a loud thump, smooth, bland smiles flashed delightedly across their faces.

The Chinese quickly poured part of the clear white liquid into a brass pot and placed it on the dung-fired stove to heat, handing the remaining beer to the two Tibetan representatives of the Lhasa government. As Crozier watched the Tibetans pour the cold white *chang* into cups, he recalled that, as a boy in Texas, he had seen "white lightnin'" whiskey made from corn which looked exactly like this beer made from barley. All the crew members, despite the fact they were almost frozen, somehow couldn't stand the idea of drinking warm beer, so they went the cold route with the Tibetans and left the hot pot to the Chinese.

After the meat was done and they had eaten, Crozier and some of the others spread their blankets on the kitchen floor and folded themselves in to get as much sleep as they could. They had a long stretch of trail ahead of them tomorrow, Doc Bo said, and they had to be up long before dawn if they wanted to arrive in Lhasa early, as they had planned.

Everyone went to bed early except the two Chinese. They sat themselves on the floor next to the hot pot of *chang* and drank cup after cup of the steaming stuff while they played a game in which

they used only their hands. Facing each other, each of the two at various times held out one hand with one or more fingers extended, a flat hand, or a doubled-up fist, the other responding with fingers, hand, or fist, as he chose. Apparently the loser had to drink a hot cup of beer because one always laughed while the other drank. Crozier lay for a while trying to puzzle out the game, but not for long, as he felt cold, half sick, and utterly weary. When he went to sleep, the Chinese were still swilling, swaying, and laughing at their mysterious game.

Next morning, it seemed to Crozier, they were up without having closed their eyes, probably closer to midnight than sunrise. While they were eating breakfast, with some of the crew complaining about the food, Doc Bo said it made him think of a delicacy he got one time while traveling in Tibet—bees boiled in their own honey. Crozier surmised that it could have happened.

"People in America cook hogs in their own grease," he told Doc.

Crozier confided to Doc that he and his comrades were looking forward to getting to Lhasa, where they might get a bath. Doc told him what one of the villagers had said on the journey when the airmen demanded plenty of water with which to wash their hands and faces.

"These strange foreigners must be filthy," the villager had said. "Our people don't think it necessary to do so much cleaning."

Doc told Crozier that one of the favorite pastimes of Lhasaites was bathing in the river Kyi during the summer season. Whole families, he said, spread

colorful tents and lived and ate along the banks of the stream at the edge of the city.[1]

As they started out on the dark trail, aided some by a faint moon, they saw, high and clear above them, faint, cold stars in a blue-black sky. The howling of a fresh wind made them pull their fur-lined robes tightly about them, and it seemed to Crozier that, now and then, he heard something like a wolf joining in a duo with the gale. Doc Bo complained that these heavy blasts usually did not rise till later in the day. Their hands and faces became rough and chapped in the cutting gusts of bitter cold. They kept Parram's flesh-broken toes wrapped as best they could, stopping now and then in the blackness to rub his legs and feet.

The stars began to pale and disappear as ridges and rocks ahead caught the first light of dawn flushing up gently and slowly from the east behind them. Crozier's gaze shifted sleepily from his horse's ears, up and back to the growing gray, then orange light. Ahead, he thought he saw ridges, but as dawn grew into day, he knew they were only banks of clouds. The tall sky overhead and on into the distant east was clear.

Two or three hours after sunrise, the cold west wind died down, and they found themselves quite hot in their heavy robes when they were in the sun. Doc Bo noted that the wind was dying about the time of day it usually rose. They rode on, making excellent time through the morning, paused briefly around

[1] Scant records which exist show mild temperatures in Lhasa, from about 32° F. in winter to as high as 84° F. in summer. For a definitive discussion of Tibetan climate, see page 341 of *Land of the 500 Million*, by George B. Cressey, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1955. The Tibetans call the summer bathing and picnic season in Lhasa *linka*, the same term meaning "park" or "garden."

noon for a lunch of cold meat and barley flour, continued for an hour or two, and then the rocky trail along a frozen stream suddenly plunged over a knoll into a broad valley.

The vale they saw far below was long, flat, and many miles across to the high mountain wall on the other side. A white city rested in the middle of it. It was Lhasa.

They continued following the stream north down onto the valley floor until it joined a much bigger one flowing west, then turned along the larger stream's banks and rode through a village which Doc Bo called Dochen. At that point, Doc said, they were about ten miles from Lhasa. By the time they had crossed another small tributary of the big river, about three miles more down the trail, Doc had explained to Crozier that this big river, the Kyi, flowed through Lhasa.

"The Tibetans call it 'The Water of Pleasure,' " Doc said.[2]

They did not go much farther down this wide valley, enclosed by dark, bare mountains on every side, until they topped another rise of ground and saw the city at closer range, a city with trees in its environs, now stripped bare by the winds of winter.

Out on the edge of the city, on a hill to the north, was a great sprawling building built of red and white stone, high as some American skyscrapers. In fact, from the top of it down to the little village resting below and in front, it was nearly a thousand feet tall, and therefore, higher than most American skyscrapers. Even from where they stood, the tow-

[2] Tibetans also call it the Middle River, and at least one scholar and one traveler have called it the Lhasa River. The traveler is dead, and the scholar was unable to furnish his source for terming it the Lhasa River when asked for it.

ering structure, called the Potala, seemed massive, part of its roof gleaming golden in the pale winter sun. They later found this was real gold, hammered tiles of the yellow metal serving as the roofs of pavilion-like tombs, these tombs containing the bodies of former incarnations of the Dalai Lama, ruler of Tibet.

"Most of the roof is gravel," Doc Bo told Crozier. "The gold roofs are only above the tombs. It also really is not one building. It only looks that way. There are several."

Crozier and his comrades halted their horses and looked down at Lhasa, strange and storied to Americans because so few have seen it. Except for two isolated hills, the city rested on the great barren plain or level valley floor, with trees only in, or immediately around, the city. The whole valley seemed bleak, especially to the north, where it stretched away desertlike to a great mountain wall, forbidding and mysterious to the beholder. This was the massive Nyenchentanglha Range, which the crew had seen from above the clouds on the night of their jump.

Their gaze swept over the entire valley, including the sites of the Rose Fence, the Rice Heap, and the Joyous monasteries, all within a twenty-mile radius of Lhasa. Whether they could see any of these lamaseries, the fame of which attracts thousands of pilgrims and young monks, Crozier did not realize because, not knowing then of their existence, the aircrew naturally did not look for them, or ask questions.

They gazed a long time at the red-and-white stone Potala, thirteen-story palace of a thousand rooms, residence of the Dalai Lama, at that time a young

god-boy ruler, considered to be the reincarnation of Chenrezi the Merciful, Tibet's patron god. Doc Bo told them the Dalai Lama was only a child.

"How old is he?" Crozier asked Doc.

"About eight or nine," Doc replied. "He was about four when he was chosen."

"Chosen?" questioned Crozier. "I thought maybe he inherited the job—oldest son of the old Dalai Lama, or something like that."

"Oh, no!" Doc exclaimed. "When the Dalai Lama dies, the Tibetans say he does not die—he 'retires to the heavenly fields.' When the old Dalai Lama passes away, the Tibetans go on a long search to find him again. It may take several years."

"Well, now," Crozier wondered, "how do they go about that?"

"They look for a child in whose new body the old Dalai Lama has been born again," Doc answered.

"Gosh, how long has this been going on?"

"For hundreds of years," said Doc. "The present Dalai Lama is the fourteenth one."[3]

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[3] Since the beginning of the Dalai Lamas, the Tibetans have not always agreed on the child to be selected, and sometimes in these circumstances there has been a drawing of lots for the choice. About 1792 or 1793, the Emperor of China ordered that a drawing be held in cases where more than one claim was made. Names and birth dates of the children were written on slips of paper and placed in a golden urn. The Tibetans developed an interesting ceremony for such drawings. The name of each child was written on many pieces of paper, and each bit of paper kneaded into a ball of *tsamba* dough. More slips of paper, on which were written the words "yes" and "no," were kneaded into the balls. Still other small sheets of paper, on which nothing was written, were worked into the doughy balls. The golden urn was shaken and some of the balls cast out. The first time three balls fell out with the same name inside them, the boy bearing that name was declared the true reincarnation, provided another ball with the word "yes" came out with them at the same time.

In some cases, the abbots of monasteries in Tibet are chosen in the same way as the Dalai Lama—that is, search is made for the children in whom they have found their reembodiment. Among them is the only woman abbot of a monastery in Tibet—the Dorje Phagmo (Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt), near Lake Yamdrok. In India, I heard of

"What kind of kid do they pick?" Crozier questioned. "Can anybody's boy be Dalai Lama?"

"He might be any child." Doc nodded. "He must be intelligent, able to learn. The present one is the son of peasants—he came from a most humble home. Some Chinese in Lhasa say his family did not speak Tibetan."

"Well, this gets stranger all the time," Crozier puzzled. "Did they find him in Tibet? What language did the family speak?"

"Yes, they found him in Tibet," Doc responded quickly. "It was near a lake called Kokonor, close to Kumbum Monastery. That's in the east, near China. I don't know what language they spoke if it wasn't Tibetan. The Tibetans say the child's name was Lhamo Dondup. The Chinese call him Lamu Tanchu."

"What's the family name?" Crozier broke in.

"There's a rumor that the Chinese say it was Chee," Doc responded. "The Tibetans don't bother about that," he continued. "In Tibet, surnames are not common, save among the nobility."

"Chee sounds like Chinese to me," Crozier reasoned. "How old was this kid when they picked him?" he queried.

"Oh," Doc paused, "I should say between four and five."[4]

"Who rules between the time the old Dalai Lama dies and the new one is found?" Crozier inquired.

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a similar custom in Nepal in which a little girl is thought to be the child in whom the terrible Hindu goddess Kali has become incarnate. In this case, the doctrine of transmigration of souls varies from the usual. The girl does not reign till death. When she reaches puberty, her successor is chosen.

[4] The fourteenth Dalai, born June 6, 1935, fled to India a few years ago, where he now lives in exile.

"A regent rules until the new Dalai Lama reaches the age of responsibility," Doc answered.

"At the time Tibet is looking for a new ruler, I'll bet every parent in the country with a young son has ambitions that he be called the Dalai Lama," Crozier surmised.

"Tibetans don't call him the Dalai Lama," Doc retorted. "Only Chinese, Mongols, Englishmen, Europeans—and I suppose, Americans—call him that."

"Boy, this is a country of confusions," Crozier pondered aloud, then went on interrogating Doc. "What *do* the Tibetans call him? And why doesn't everyone call him the same thing the Tibetans call him?"

"The Tibetans call him many things," Doc replied. " 'The Inmost One.' 'The Presence.' 'The Precious Protector.' They have many other names. The Mongols began calling him Dalai Lama a long time ago. The word *dalai* is a Mongol word. It means 'ocean.' "

As they rode on toward the city, the company talked of the Potala, too.

"Still not as tall as the Empire State Building," Spencer said.

"Yeah," McCallum agreed. "But, just the same, I'd hate to have a job washing windows in it."

"Perfect spot for a penthouse," Spencer remarked.[5]

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[5] The five airmen didn't know it then, but when they rode into Lhasa that December afternoon in 1943, only six Americans had ever been there before them. Preceding them had been William Montgomery McGovern, political science expert; Suydam Cutting, an American naturalist, and his wife; Theos Bernard, of Arizona, who had become a monk; and two Army officers, Lieutenant Colonel Ilia Tolstoy and Captain Brooke Dolan, III. The latter two had been sent across Tibet by General Joseph W. Stilwell to study the feasibility of a motor route from India to China. The route of the Ledo Road across Burma later was chosen.

Lowell Thomas, Jr., on page 21 of his book, *Out of This World*, says

Doc Bo and the two Tibetans with the caravan had sent messengers on ahead to tell of the coming Americans, and Crozier soon found that Dr. Kung Ch'ing-tsung, director of the Mongolian and Tibetan affairs Commission of the Chinese Government in Lhasa, had taken extreme pains to show hospitality. As the caravan drew near the city from the south, the airmen saw a big tent pitched at a stone bridge near the far bank of the Kyi River. After crossing the bridge, they approached the tent, and the two Tibetans who had ridden with them all the way from Tsetang trotted their mounts on past it. The two Chinese who had ridden out from Lhasa to meet them on their first night on the trail reined up in front of the tent, along with Doc Bo.

As they dismounted, a Tibetan servant standing

Arch Steele, in 1944 a *Chicago Daily News* correspondent, was "sixth on the Lhasa scene." Of himself and his father, Thomas says, "We were to be next," thus identifying themselves as the seventh and eighth Americans to reach the Tibetan capital. Apparently Thomas is taking into account only those Americans who have been officially received by the Dalai Lama, and therefore eliminates McGovern and Crozier and his crew despite the fact he deals briefly with their being there elsewhere in his book. Neither McGovern nor the plane crew saw the Dalai Lama; the crew, however, was invited to Lhasa by the Tibetan government.

Therefore, if all Americans who have been in Lhasa are considered, the plane crew raised the number from six to eleven. Steele was the twelfth American, and the Thomases, father and son, were thirteenth and fourteenth. Steele was there in 1944, the crew in 1943. Steele, in a letter to me from his home in Boise, Idaho, dated January 8, 1956, says, "My series of articles on the trip in the *Chicago Daily News* began November 18, 1944. That means the trip must have been made during the summer of 1944, probably ending in late summer." The late Sir Basil Gould, Indian Civil Service political officer, confirms this in his published memoirs.

Apparently the first American ever invited to Lhasa was Albert L. Shelton, a medical missionary who went to Tibet about 1903. While at Batang, Shelton wrote the Dalai Lama, seeking permission to enter the Forbidden City. The Dalai Lama's reply read, "I know of your work and that you have come a long way to do good, and, so far as I am concerned, I will put no straw in your way, providing there are no foreign treaties to prevent your coming." Apparently there is no record that Dr. Shelton ever went. (Pages 134-35, *Pioneering in Tibet*, by Albert L. Shelton, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, 1921.)

Lhasa.
15th Dec.

Dear Crozier,

I have been told that you are now on your way to Lhasa. The Tibetan Government have told me that you may all come & stay with me at the British Mission, so I hope you will all come straight there when you reach Lhasa. Ask for DEKYILINGKA, the name of our house.

The Tibetan Government have promised that they will give you all assistance in getting back to your headquarters, so I'm sure your troubles are now almost over.

Yours sincerely
W. Sherriff.

P.S. I sent your message to your headquarters on morning of Dec. 12th.

PHOTOSTAT OF SHERRIFF'S NOTE TO CROZIER IN LHASA

in front of the tent stepped up to Doc Bo and handed him a small, plain envelope, the kind usually used for social stationery. Doc barely glanced at it, then handed it to Crozier. Crozier, seeing it was addressed to him, broke it open and read:

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15th Dec.

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Yours sincerely
G. SHERRIFF.

P.S. I sent your message to your headquarters on morning of Dec. 12th.

Doc, the Chinese, and their five American charges walked inside the tent and onto carpets, where they found a table with glasses and a few cakes and sweetmeats. Crozier noticed that the emphasis was not on food, but liquids with which to wash it down. In the center of the table, he saw several bottles of the familiar African brandy. The Chinese also had provided *chang*, the favorite Tibetan beverage, and, just in case some thirst might remain unslaked, they

[6] Crozier, when hearing the name of the British Mission house pronounced, thought it sounded as if it should be spelled "Dinkilinka." Hence that phonetic spelling has been used in this book.

had Chinese wine, somewhat like the *jing-bow* juice the five Americans had known in Kunming. At each place on the table, Crozier saw large, greenish-blue glasses, thick, and with bubbles inside the glass on the bottom and sides, somewhat like the cheap water glasses found in American five-and-dime stores.

Crozier and his four crewmen were ushered to seats together, and their Chinese hosts used three bottles of the African brandy, each containing a fifth of a gallon, to make five drinks for them. After the drinks had been poured, one of the Chinese officials whom Crozier took to be Dr. Kung welcomed them and apologized for what the Chinese had to offer in the way of the cup that cheers.

"We are sorry that brandy is scarce," he said, "and that we have only the poorest kind. I know it is plentiful in America, as everything is."

To begin the more or less liquid banquet, the Chinese welcoming committee sipped a toast to its American guests. Responding, Crozier and his crew lifted their filled glasses and drank a toast to their hosts. Another Chinese official made a speech, and the fliers swallowed a smaller drink to Doc Bo. On the third round, they drank to Tibet, on the fourth to China, and on the fifth to America, with Chinese speeches between libations. After that, they sipped a few to the Dalai Lama, Chiang Kai-shek, and President Roosevelt. Crozier was next with one to Texas, Governor Coke Stevenson, and the Texas flag, and then Spencer proposed Rockville Center, Long Island.

Having a collective interest in remaining upright in their seats, the members of the crew saw to it that these potations of honor and respect were not very deep ones.

"Why not include the New York flag?" Crozier suggested, turning to Spencer.

"I'm like the fellow from Jersey," Spencer replied. "I'm not sure we've got a flag."

"Well, if you New Yorkers have a flag or not," Crozier said, "let's drink to it. I'm running out of things to toast."

After a time, despite conservative draughts, in the minds of the Americans the tent seemed to be turning. The Chinese were not doing so badly, as they, true to their custom, were running in relief teams constantly. The tent was spinning at a fast clip for Crozier.

"What's the altitude here?" he asked suddenly, turning to Doc Bo.

"Nearly thirteen thousand feet," Doc replied.

"It's making me dizzy," Crozier complained.

The Chinese gave the airmen tins of British biscuits, several old coins, some of which they said were two thousand years old, and also some Tibetan currency. The fliers immediately added the bills to their short snorter rolls.

After the Chinese were satisfied with the amount of alcohol their guests had imbibed, Doc Bo herded them out of the tent, the Chinese suggesting politely that the crew join them at the headquarters of the Chinese Commission in Lhasa for a banquet. Doc Bo told them that, after they feasted with the Chinese, he would guide them to Dinkilinka, the headquarters of the British Mission, inside a walled park on the southwest edge of the city. At the moment, though, they didn't care where they were going—anywhere away from that revolving tent.

Outside, as Spencer mounted, his horse shied and galloped away at a dead run in the wrong direction.

Jumping into the saddle of another horse, one of the Chinese headed after Spencer, caught the runaway mount and led it back to the tent. Spencer, when told of the incident later, never could recall it. He came to the conclusion that the horse objected to the African brandy, *jing-bow* juice, and *chang* on the breaths of all present.

Spencer safely recovered, they managed to mount and ride on into Lhasa. They felt a warm glow, as if they were seeing everything from the inside of a frosted light bulb. Nevertheless, they stayed straight in their saddles, kept their thoughts sober and their mouths shut for more than half a mile, pulling away from the Kyi River, and getting more into the heart of town. The horses picked their way through crooked, winding streets thronged with men, yaks, horses, and mules. Bazaars and stalls lined the streets, and in some places, goods were stacked in the middle of these unpaved thoroughfares, silk, rough porcelain dishes, and large bales of brick tea.

In front of some of the shops were structures built in the shape of pyramids. As they passed one of these, Crozier saw something burning on the top, giving off a warm, pungent smell, somewhat like that of pine cones or needles.

"What are they doing?" he asked Doc Bo, pointing to the rising smoke. "Burning incense?"

"It is an offering to the gods," Doc replied in the toneless, casual way he sometimes answered questions.

Crozier, as he rode along, noticed one similarity in the Tibetan houses to many he had seen in China —no glass panes in the windows. In most cases, the windows were covered with a cloth similar to mos-

quito netting, but with wider meshes; on others, glossy paper was tacked to the frames; and on some windows, wooden shutters protected the cloth and paper from high winds and kept out the cold. Crozier recalled how, when netting was tacked on the windows at his hostel on the high Yunnan plateau in China, the harsh winds of that bleak upland soon tore them to shreds.

That thought gave him a touch of nostalgia for Chiang Kai-shek's country, something he wouldn't have believed a month before.

"I'd settle for one of Madame Chiang's hostels right now," he muttered mournfully as McCallum rode up alongside him.

"What'd you say, Chief?" McCallum asked quietly, just loud enough to be heard above the creak of the high, hornless Tibetan saddles.

"Said I'd settle for one of Madame's hostels right now, rats and all."[7]

"Roger," McCallum agreed with enthusiasm.

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[7] American military personnel in China during World War II were housed and fed by a Chinese agency called the War Area Service Corps, a brainchild of Madame Chiang Kai-shek. The housing units at the air bases were called hostels.

CHAPTER NINE

THEY ARRIVED AT THE CHINESE FOREIGN office, on the Barkor, an irregular square about two hundred and fifty yards in length on its longest side, in the middle of the afternoon. The street, though broad, was dirty and full of trash and reeked with the smell of animal and human waste. Goods were piled about in the street and stalls, and Crozier, before they went into the flat-roofed stone building, called Doc Bo's attention to an extremely tall poplar tree growing down on the western end of the square.

"The Tibetans say it came from the hair of Buddha," Doc remarked.

Before entering the Chinese foreign office, Crozier noticed that the building's windows were covered with paper instead of glass, and the beams, cornices, and window frames of the solid, well-built structure were painted red.

Going inside, the Americans were shown immediately to a banquet table, where they were served the first of many courses. The meal lasted nearly all the remainder of the afternoon, and after the first hour at the table, they became aware of a muffled hum or buzzing of voices going on outside the building. At first, Crozier didn't bother himself about it; then, when the noise got louder and louder, he asked what was going on.

"A great crowd has gathered," Doc Bo informed him briefly.

At the moment, Crozier didn't bother to ask Doc

why, assuming they were running into more Tibetan curiosity about the strange foreigners who had jumped from their flying machine.

Since he had been eating and nibbling at the Chinese provisions for more than an hour, Crozier felt the food absorbing the effects of the African brandy, for which he was grateful; he felt a sense of well-being and didn't dream that trouble was brewing.

By the time the meal was finished and everyone was stone-cold sober, Crozier began to realize the true facts about the noise outside. The muffled alarm reaching his ears had grown, like the sound of rolling thunder when a storm rises slowly on a summer evening. Crozier by now heard shouts above a general bedlam of voices, but mostly it was a sustained, harsh rumble. He began to sense an unfriendly note in the now loud clamor. He heard something heavy strike the building.

"What in the name of God is this devil's dingdong about?" Crozier shouted to Doc Bo.

"An angry crowd is outside," Doc replied and disappeared with some of the Chinese.

About twenty or thirty more Chinese immediately followed Doc Bo and soon brought horses to the front of the building for Crozier and his comrades to mount. Following other Chinese to the entrance, Crozier and the crew walked out onto the dirty, unpaved square, facing the droning murmur of ten thousand angry Tibetans. No sooner had they emerged into the open than the people began pushing and shoving forward, one of the mob throwing a rock and hitting Spencer in the side. The Chinese rode into the gathered throng, clubbing and whipping the people right and left. Tibetans, whom Crozier took to be policemen, or soldiers, moved in excitedly among

the throng, banging the heads and lashing the ribs of all those who got within range of their staffs and long whips.

Crozier spied one giant of a fellow who proved himself to be extremely effective with a unique weapon. Dressed in a heavy red robe, dirty and unkempt, he flailed sullenly about him with a heavy metal key about a foot long, which was attached to his wrist with a leather thong. He clouted firmly and without emotion the unhappy and somewhat solid skulls of the multitude in his vicinity. The people in his area gave way swiftly before him, feeling the knots raised on their heads by the massive key. Crozier thought the man must be custodian of the largest treasure-house in the country.

The throng was tightly massed, surging over that part of the square, until the Chinese and Tibetans who were opposing the people scattered them somewhat. The Chinese, aided by the soldiers, or police, cleared enough room for Crozier and the crew to mount their horses.

Urging their mounts at first cautiously forward, the Chinese, Doc Bo, and their American friends gradually got through to the edge of the angry crowd. As they cleared it, the mob began throwing stones in earnest. After the fliers found their way clear, they outdistanced the people and were soon beyond rock range.[1]

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[1] Crozier and his crew were not the first Americans ever to be greeted by a mob in Lhasa. When William McGovern, the first American ever in the city, visited there in 1923, an angry crowd threw rocks and rubble at the building in which he was lodged, crying, "Death to the foreigner."

More than two hundred years before the five American airmen were in the Forbidden City, other Westerners faced a mob of Lhasaites. The Dalai Lama granted Franciscan monks permission to build a Christian church. Rains flooded the Kyi River, and Lamaist monks and others blamed the high water on the Christians. The

Huge dogs, fortunately most of them chained, rushed at them along the westward route they took. Mastiffs like these guarded the Dalai Lama's residence as well as every other important estate, Crozier was told later. They were strong enough to drag the carcass of a horse or yak, Doc Bo said.

They saw no other kind of dog except a small black one covered with long hair from nose to tail. His eyes, face, and ears were completely hidden, with only the end of his nose visible.

"It's a relief to see a dog that doesn't want you for dinner," McCallum remarked when they glimpsed the little ball of canine wool in the middle of the street.

"Gosh, that's a pretty dog," Parram said. "What kind is it?"

Tibetans gathered in a mob, but the Christians dispersed the crowd by displaying their ornately-sealed permits from the Dalai Lama.

Lowell Thomas, Jr., perpetuates the error of the magazine and news articles that Lhasaites were friendly on page 96 of *Out of This World*. He says: "Even the residents of Lhasa were friendly and did not resent the flight over the Dalai Lama's city, sacrilegious as it was."

The flight over the Dalai Lama was one factor that caused the resentment of the people. Seating one's self higher than the Dalai Lama at a play or performance, or watching him in a procession from a second-story window, would produce the same reaction.

One other possible reason for the mob was the bad feeling in Lhasa in the summer of 1943 between the Chinese and Tibetans. A pro-British group of Tibetans had established a degree of power and had created a Bureau of Foreign Affairs. This group tried to make the Chinese Commission of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs conduct its business with the bureau, in effect asserting independence and treating China as a foreign power. The Tibetans arrested Chinese, stopped supplies to them, and generally subjected them to bad treatment. The Tibetan group was unsuccessful and finally stopped its show of force after receiving a warning from Chiang Kai-shek's government. Historically, China has held some degree of suzerainty over Tibet for hundreds of years, depending on its power at any given time. People within the ethnic borders of Tibet always have to a degree resisted this domination, depending on their strength and Chinese weakness at the moment.

The Tibetan government was friendly and helpful to the downed fliers.

"Dunno," Huffman replied. "Looks kinda like a junior-grade sheep dog to me."

"Looks like an Airedale that needs a haircut," Parram guessed.

"Airmail dog?" Spencer questioned with a twinkle in his eye. "That's a new kind of beast to me."

"Well, whatever it is," Crozier commented with a faint grin, "you couldn't prove by me it's got any eyes or ears. Probably hasn't or it'd be making tracks out of town, too."

"I'd call it a wall-to-wall dog," Spencer remarked with another gleam in his eye.[2]

The Tibetan police and soldiers, some of them big and brawny, with fierce faces and fantastic dress, rode along. At first, Crozier hadn't been sure whether these riders were riding with them or against them.

They had two miles to cover to get to the British Mission, the first mile through large crowds of people. They saw Tibetan ladies with gaily-striped aprons and coiffures plaited with yak's hair on high, antlerlike headgear staring fixedly at them from windows. The headdress frames were made of wood, fitted rather closely to the head, and decorated with pearls and corals. Their hair—dark, long, and straight—was parted in the middle and fluffed and looped over the frames on both sides. They wore silk waists and robes of every contrasting color, and the aprons had rainbow stripes of green, red, purple, and gold. Their earrings were turquoise blue, and on their bosoms hung charm boxes of gold set with jewels that glinted in the afternoon light. These

[2] The animal was probably a Lhasa terrier. The Dalai Lama gave several of them to Suydam Cutting, the American naturalist, about 1932. Cutting bred them successfully in New Jersey.

Lhasa women had almond eyes, flat noses, and high cheekbones that made Crozier think once more of American Indians. Some of them were beautiful enough to stare at, but he figured he and the crew were in enough trouble for one day.

Little children ran here, there, and everywhere as the crowds thinned out, and small white donkeys barely moved out of the way of their horses' hooves. In places, men nobly dressed in maroon robes, with shoulder-length pendants hanging from their left ears, watched in the narrow streets. The American riders, with their Chinese and Tibetan protectors, continued to proceed westward.

About half a mile from the Chinese Commission headquarters, and around a hundred yards from the main part of town, they came to a more open area and approached a bridge across a sluggish, stagnant tributary of the Kyi River which was unlike any bridge Crozier had ever seen. Built of stone, it had a roof and walls with five square, windowlike openings on either side, making it look like a corridor. It reminded Crozier of pictures he had seen of covered bridges in New England, but there was actually little resemblance. This bridge had a gate on the far end, which barred approach to the center of the city on that street. The roof was made of blue tile the color of turquoise, and at the four corners of the eaves and on the ridge piece of the roof were seven gilt spirelike objects shining pallidly against the gray hill on which the Potala rested. The eaves were designed at the corners like roofs Crozier had seen in China, curving upward in the familiar tradition of Chinese architecture.

As Crozier watched, a robe-clad man came out of the bridge, stopping near the stream and urinating

in the water. A short distance from the blue-roofed bridge, which led directly toward the Potala, the riders turned left into another road for a short space and then faced west again.

Over them, as they rode along, towered the mighty, massive Potala on its pedestal hill. Below and in front of it was a walled cluster of buildings which Doc said was the village of Zhol. Also, down below this fortress-palace of the little boy who was both king and god, Crozier saw three large *chortens* among the leafless winter willows, the center one having a gilt spire, like the yellow tiles on top of the Potala.

They had not ridden more than a mile from the Chinese Commission headquarters on the Barkor until they were even with the Potala, looking up at it to the north, less than half a mile away. At this point, they reined south for about three hundred yards, keeping farther away from the high red-and-white, forbidding palace. Between them and the Potala was meadowland which might have been flooded in times past. It was covered with the dead, withered grass of winter and sparse groves of poplars and willows. There was no snow in Lhasa, nor had they seen any at any time in Tibet so far, except far away on the highest mountain peaks. The surrounding mountains were gray and bleak.

Overhead, out of the north, clouds grayer than the mountains came scudding across the sky of the closing afternoon, except behind the Potala, where they appeared white, with here and there a tinge of pink from the sun, which was dropping low in the west. The west side of the great building caught the reflected light, and the east end appeared faint and dark in the shadows.

Crozier caught himself straining his eyes to see if he could find someone watching them from the Potala's roof or windows. He could see no one, although he did see a cluster of robed figures around the base of one of the big *chortens* about five hundred yards northwest of them. This monument looked as if it were ten or twelve times as high as the people below it.

After the angry mob in the middle of the town, everything seemed ominous and still. Sunset and the coming twilight were about to wrap this high, strange valley in an even thicker blanket of silence.

When they turned west again, after their short detours to the south, all the time along a road or path, they saw another hill about half a mile west, the summit of which seemed to be about three-quarters of a mile southwest of the Potala. Atop the rough, rocky slope was another building, not much more than a single chunk of masonry compared to the massive Potala, looking more like a thick-walled mediaeval fort than anything else. Doc Bo told Crozier this edifice was the Tibetan School of Medicine. When they got to this hill, they rode along the curving, worn path on its south side, with the sandbanks of the Kyi River about two or three hundred yards to their left. They crossed another small bridge or two and rode past a white rock wall at the base of the hill, in the center of which was a small masonry gate with a roof. Around the hill they found the pathway virtually god-bordered with many images. Doc Bo told Crozier the name of this rocky elevation was Chagpori, which he said meant "Iron Hill" in English.[3]

[3] This curiously-formed height in the environs of Lhasa has also been referred to in English as "The Tent-Shaped Hill."

"What's the name of the hill over there where the Dalai Lama's palace is?" Crozier asked Doc.

"In English, it means 'Red Hill,' " Doc replied.

"It looks more of a blue or gray to me," Crozier said.

As they rounded the Iron Hill, Crozier looked back and saw that a few Tibetans were following them on foot. Crozier called it to Doc's attention.

"What got into that crowd?" Crozier asked. "Was it something we did? People have treated us fine so far, but now we get here to the capital of the country and they want to kill us evidently."

"We will soon be at the British Mission," Doc replied. "You shall hear why the people wished to stone you."

When they arrived on the west side of the Iron Hill, they continued west through rows of poplar and willow trees for about two hundred yards, turned north for another two hundred, west again for still another two hundred, all the while through willows and poplars, then south into a compound, where they found Dinkilinka.[4]

The compound they rode into was a dense grove of trees about a city block square, surrounded by an adobe wall, in which they found the headquarters of the British government mission to Tibet. The compound contained several buildings, including the residence of the head of the mission, stables, servant houses, an outside cookhouse, and a greenhouse for flowers. The estate ran down to the Kyi River, where Crozier saw slender, tall birds and yellow-

[4] Dinkilinka means Happiness Park. It is an estate containing a summer house belonging to Kundeling Monastery. Kundeling, about six hundred yards northeast of Dinkilinka, leased Happiness Park to the British and Indians at the time the aircrew was there. Norbulinka, meaning Jewel Park, summer palace of the Dalai Lama, is also a near neighbor of Dinkilinka.

breasted ducks standing on a strip of sandy beach. The grounds contained a rather large and spacious flower garden, now crushed by the unfriendly grip of winter. Over the walls, Crozier noted a small stream flowing toward the Kyi, and beyond it the flat valley of barley fields.

The grove of trees covered the airmen's bare spirits more than they shaded their heads as they thought of all the cold miles they had come through an almost treeless landscape of bare rocks.

"Now," Crozier thought to himself, "Joyce Kilmer's poem about trees means more to me."

They rode past a small pavilion surrounded by poplars and walnuts and up to the main house, a brick building with a flat roof and a large willow in front. As they reined in at the entrance, a British major rushed out.

"Come on in and have a drink," he welcomed them. "I'm Major George Sherriff."[5]

Dismounting and going inside, the airmen met the major's wife Betty and didn't decline the drinks, although they felt no special need for them at the moment, the Chinese welcoming committee having taken care of them admirably.

They entered a big room about twenty by thirty feet in dimension which had a large map of Tibet on the wall. Leading to the second floor, they saw the usual steep ladders instead of stairways, their rungs worn by the countless feet that had climbed them. Sherriff showed them to chairs, and servants placed drinks of gin and lime in their hands. Month-old copies of the London *Times* and the Calcutta *States-*

[5] The George Sherriff of this story is the experienced botanical explorer and naturalist. He has traveled extensively in remote parts of the eastern Himalayas.

man were scattered about on tables. Music from the Calcutta radio station filled the room.

"Did you get my note?" Sherriff asked Crozier.

"Yes, sir," Crozier replied. "And I want you to know how grateful we are for everything."

The others nodded assent.

"Nonsense," the major interjected. "We owe you the best for being in this war with us. But I must say I hardly expected it to get up here, at least in this way."

"It's very kind of you, sir, to say that," Crozier responded. "After all, the Japs jumped us first at Pearl Harbor. Anyway it's a relief to be here. You don't know how good these trees look to us."

"They look good to everyone, including the Tibetans here in Lhasa," Sherriff replied. "As you've already seen, much of Tibet is rather a treeless land. Trees are precious. We have to watch our trees rather closely, as do others hereabouts. If we didn't guard them, urchins would come in and break off limbs for firewood."

"We even have an apple tree," Mrs. Sherriff said.

"But it doesn't do too well here," Sherriff interposed. "The apples are hardly bigger than walnuts."

"Too bad you had to come here this time of year," Mrs. Sherriff entered the conversation again. "Our flowers are beautiful in the summer. Hollyhocks are tall as the house. We have beautiful marigolds, asters, and large white peonies. But roses don't do too well here."

"Yes," Sherriff agreed with his wife. "You chaps have come to Lhasa at the wrong time. Betty has doubled the size of the garden since she's been here." He paused. "The meadows and fields about here are

not so bare in the summer, and ducks and geese swarm around the marshes."

"Can you hunt them?" one of the airmen asked.

"Absolutely not," Sherriff ejaculated. "It would be the quickest way to get in trouble with the Tibetans."

"I saw some yellow-breasted ducks down by the river as we rode in," Crozier commented.

"There's an interesting thing I've heard about those ducks," Sherriff responded. "Some Tibetans say their feathers used to be white, but when the birds got to know Buddhism, they changed to the Buddhist color."

Sherriff pointed to the ladders leading to the second floor.

"I suppose you've already used Tibetan ladders," he said. "Sorry we can't offer you staircases. There's an odd thing about the way Tibetans use the ladders in their homes. They come down the ladders with their backs to them. They laugh at you if you come down facing them."

"Now I know why they had so much fun when we climbed down the ladders at Tsetang," Crozier exclaimed suddenly with a wide grin of understanding.

Sherriff rose from his chair.

"I imagine you chaps want to clean up before dinner," he said, drawing the conversation to a close. "I'll show you to your rooms. If you haven't finished your drinks, bring them with you."

Walking ahead, he led them to rooms on the ground floor.

Crozier, alone as the day ended, looked out the window and saw the sun set in an angry purple fire. As he watched briefly, the lonely blast of conch shells and trumpets reached his ears from some monastery.

Servants brought hot water into Crozier's room in buckets and poured it into a tub. Crozier's resolve to soak off the accumulated filth of the trail weakened when he exposed his bare skin to the frigid night cold of the unheated quarters, so he made short work of his ablutions.

After he and the others enjoyed the luxury of shaves, and Doc Bo gave them further cursory medical attention at a small one-room hospital on the grounds of the estate, they joined Major and Mrs. Sherriff at dinner on the second floor, the Americans ascending the ladder with the determination to come downstairs later in the proper manner—with their backs to the rungs. The course of the dinner that surprised them the most was Mrs. Sherriff's homemade ice cream.

Despite the energy he got from the first good meal since they left Kunming, Crozier's body sagged with weariness. He was anxious to discuss the subject of getting out of Tibet with Sherriff, as well as the reasons for the crew's being stoned by the mob of Lhasaites; but he was looking forward more right now to sleeping in his first real bed in about two weeks.

After dinner, Sherriff offered to show them a movie at the Dinkilinka cinema, set up in the big room where they had been welcomed downstairs.

"Charles Chaplin has been one of the most popular with the Tibetans here," Sherriff said. "They've liked Rin-Tin-Tin and Mickey Mouse. We have a rather late Laurel and Hardy comedy for this part of the world. Perhaps you'd like to see it." He paused. "The Tibetans really take to the cinema," he continued. "I'm told when they first saw motion pictures, most of them didn't believe they were real. But, later, when they saw films of themselves on the

screen, they were convinced. We've had as many as fifty or sixty Tibetans in here for shows. There's hardly room for half the number."

Sherriff let the airmen pick the film they wished to see, so they chose Laurel and Hardy. As the projector whirred, the five forgot the unfriendly crowd they had met in the center of Lhasa, and Crozier let his mind stray from its preoccupation with the many high, cold miles back to their outfit in the Assam Valley of India. They soon laughed their recent unpleasantness and hardship into the recesses of memory.

After the show, Crozier asked Sherriff when they were going to talk about getting back. He also wanted to know why the throng of people in Lhasa had gathered in an unruly mob and stoned them.

"Let's talk about it in the morning," Sherriff said. "Dr. Kung, the Chinese commissioner; Mr. Ringang; and possibly some other officials of the Tibetan government will be here to discuss your predicament. I imagine you want to turn in early, after the rigors of your journey and all your troubles here. I'm sorry we don't have the best in the world for you, but we're at the end of the world, as far as the best in the world is concerned. Especially, I'm sorry we can't offer you better medical attention. We once had an English doctor, but the war has changed things—even here, you know."

"Sir," Crozier replied, "that makes me think of our doctor companion, Sahib Rai Bo, who came out to meet us at Tsetang. He really threw his weight around, shouting at the villagers. I had to call him down on that, for the villagers had been kind to us. He is what we Americans would call a character. He mixed in loudly on everything, but he really

helped us out, too. How much does he really know about medicine? Is he really a doctor of medicine?"

"He's what you would call a babu in India," Sherriff replied, "and that's where he came from originally, I'm told. The story is he left the country rather suddenly. He first went to Nepal, and from there he found asylum in Tibet. He knows something of medicine and has served us here in that capacity. Yes, as you chaps would say in America, he's a pillroller. He has no medical degree, but he has enough knowledge that he does good here."

CHAPTER TEN

NEXT MORNING, THEY FELT LIKE POLishing the Tibetan boots Mrs. Sherriff was wearing when they saw the breakfast she had on the table for them. While at the table, dressed in a rustic skirt and coat, she challenged them to a game of ping-pong that afternoon. They didn't have much hope of beating her when her husband told them later that she was Betty Hughes before her marriage, a contender for the British Wimbledon Cup.

After breakfast, they were directed to a conference with their host, Major Sherriff. They went to the room where they had been welcomed to Dinkilinka the night before, finding Sherriff in the company of a stout, blond man, the two standing in front of the immense map of Tibet on the wall.

"Good morning, you chaps," Sherriff said as they entered the room. "Come on over and meet Mr. Fox, our mission wireless operator."

He turned to the man beside him.

"Foxy," he said, "this is Lieutenant Crozier, pilot of the American plane that got into trouble. Crozier, will you introduce your chaps to Mr. Reginald Fox?"

Crozier extended his hand to Fox, who grasped it, and then Crozier introduced the crew.

"First," Sherriff told them, "Foxy already has sent your full names, ranks, and serial numbers by radio for your American headquarters in New Delhi. Now, we have to get word out you chaps have

arrived here all right. We'll send any other information you like."

While Crozier was collecting messages from his crew, Sherriff told them that three representatives of the Tibetan government were due to come in later in the morning.

After Crozier collected all the information the crew wanted sent and consolidated it into one message, he gave it to Spencer, the radio operator.

"Spencer," he asked, "will you go with Mr. Fox and see if you can be of any assistance to him?"

"Yes, sir," Spencer replied, taking the message and glancing at Fox to see if he approved.

"Come along," Fox nodded to Spencer, "and I'll show you how we operate AC4YN. If you get back to flying the Himalaya again, you'll have to call us sometime."

The two moved off together to prepare and transmit the message.

Sherriff turned to the large map on the wall after picking up a pointer from the table.

"This is the largest map of Tibet in existence anywhere," he said, "a work of the Topographical Survey of the Government of India. Crozier, I'll show you and your men the place you jumped and the route by which you reached Lhasa."

"I'd rather you showed us the way out," Crozier said with his big, boyish grin.

Sherriff laughed.

"I was coming to that," he continued. "We'll not only do that, but we'll furnish you an acceptable map to take along when you go."

After Sherriff had shown Crozier the detailed route by which the crew would get back to India—a mule track across some of the world's highest

mountain passes—Crozier went over it with McCallum.

"Better get some more parachutes, Chief," McCallum remarked as Crozier concluded his recitation. "If we fall off some of those mountains, it will be higher than our jump from the plane."

As McCallum paused, Sherriff changed the subject.

"I understand the Tibetan who helped you at the first village you went to and then accompanied you here may also come in this morning," he said to Crozier. "I believe he's distressed about the mob and the stoning."

"You mean Sinow Ulla," Crozier said. "We'll certainly be glad to see him. We owe him a lot."

"I suppose you know you're the first people in history to fly over Lhasa," Sherriff commented, changing the subject again.

"No, we didn't know it," Crozier replied. "But I'm not surprised. It's a long way up here, and the air as well as the roads are rough. We saw the lights of a town a little while before we jumped, and later when we found we were only about sixty air miles from Lhasa, I thought maybe it was the town we passed over."

"Yes," Sherriff continued. "You created quite a sensation here that night. There was general alarm among the people. I understand some of them took to the hills, in a manner of speaking. There is resentment among the population. You saw a demonstration of it when the mob stoned you."[1]

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[1] Heinrich Harrer, on page 258 of *Seven Years in Tibet* (E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1954), describes the plane's flight over the city as causing "general alarm." Harrer says the first news of the five Americans' parachute jumps reached Lhasa two days after the crew landed. This news, according to Harrer, came from Samye

"Resentment!" Crozier exclaimed. "So that's it. But why? We didn't harm anyone."

"Not from your point of view," returned Sherriff. "But let me tell you what you and your chaps did do. You flew over Lhasa, and so looked down on the Dalai Lama. They don't let their own people get up higher than he does, let alone foreigners."

"We didn't see him," Crozier rejoined. "We weren't even looking for him and wouldn't have known him from any of the rest of them. You could have asked any of us before we got here, and we wouldn't have known whether he was an old man or a boy. We barely saw the town, and if the clouds hadn't parted for a minute or two, we wouldn't have seen it then. We just saw some lights down on the ground. We didn't see the Dalai Lama, so how could we look down on him? We didn't know he was there. We didn't even know he existed."

"That's not the idea, Crozier, old fellow," Sherriff replied. "You *were* above him, you know. No one must be on a level higher than he, whether seated at an opera, watching him in a parade, or flying over him in a plane, although I understand some of the braver and less pious blades hereabouts glance out of darkened second-story windows when he comes along in the parade on the Tibetan New Year's Day.

"Some of the Lhasaites think, I understand, that the crash of your plane is awesome punishment for what they would term your 'brazen' offense. In order to calm the people down, the government have fos-

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Monastery. (From *Seven Years in Tibet*, by Heinrich Harrer. Reprinted by permission of Rupert Hart-Davis, Ltd., who published the work in London, 1953, and E. P. Dutton & Company, who published it in New York, 1954). Harrer, an Austrian, was not in Lhasa at the time the aircrew was. He came later.

tered the idea that the plane was wrecked for punishment.

"But don't take it too seriously, Crozier. You're not the first American ever to be stoned here, you know. A good many years ago an American chap named McGovern came without being asked, and a crowd gathered and cast sticks and stones at the house he lodged in. He must have had a first-rate sense of humor, for as the story goes, he put on Tibetan clothing and joined the mob and assisted.

"The Dalai Lama looks down on the entire town from the Potala, you know," Sherriff continued. "Remember the hill you came around on the way to Dinkilinka?"

"You mean the one about two hundred yards east of here?" Crozier interrupted.

"Precisely," Sherriff agreed. "The one with the Tibetan School of Medicine on it."

"School of Medicine?" Crozier queried. "Do they train doctors?"

"Their own particular brand, yes," Sherriff replied. "When the medical student gets out, he believes the spittle of monks has a healing effect. Also, he may prescribe a prayer on a piece of paper, written by one of the lamas. He'll roll the paper into a pill and have the patient swallow it."

There was a pause, with Crozier staring incredulously at the British major.

"You look as if you may not believe it." Sherriff smiled. "Another standard prescription in some parts of the country, I understand, is to make a little image of the ill person and wrap it in some of his clothing. This is offered to the gods, evidently with the hope they're unobserving enough to take this substitute for the patient."

Sherriff paused again.

"Well, anyway, to get back to the subject," he resumed, "I'm told the hill on which the medical school rests is higher than the hill on which the Potala is built. An additional story or two was added to the Potala so no one could look down on the Dalai Lama from the other hill."

"Major," Crozier observed, "this place is surrounded by mountains a lot higher than the Potala. Anyone is higher than the Dalai Lama on the trail we took into town from the pass. Thousands—no doubt, millions—of people must have come down that trail in times past."

"That is an observation within the realms of reason which I am sure the Tibetans would prefer to ignore," Sherriff replied. "Doubtless it has escaped them through the centuries. More to the point, the government want you to get out as quickly as possible."

"Gosh, I don't understand it," Crozier said. "Up till we hit here, people were so friendly. Villagers gave us money. Sinow Ulla really took care of us. We owe him money, and a lot more. We probably owe him our lives."

"Oh, the government are not unfriendly," Sherriff replied. "Or, at least they are being unfriendly in a friendly way. Doubtless, some other people hereabouts are not unfriendly. But many are, as you well know. The government are organizing a caravan to take you out."

Crozier asked Sherriff how they should behave when representatives of the Tibetan government came in.

"Oh, don't worry too much about it," Sherriff said lightly. "I have three ceremonial scarves for each

of you to present to the three Tibetans coming in, as Ringang said that both foreign ministers would be here. That will be a scarf from each of you to each of the three of them. I might as well distribute the scarves to you chaps now," Sherriff continued as he stepped over to a low table and picked up a pile of fifteen white scarves and handed three each to the members of the crew. "When you're introduced," Sherriff went on, "bow and extend your arms with a scarf hanging over them to the man you're meeting."

Sherriff showed them how by making the proper bow himself.

"Major," Crozier said to Sherriff, "you spoke of one of the Tibetans by name—Mr. Ring-something-or-other—"

"Yes," Sherriff broke in, "Ringang—Kusho Changopa—better known as Ringang around Lhasa. He'll act as interpreter for the two ministers. Speaks perfect English, you know. Educated at Rugby in England."

"Did I understand you to say," Crozier asked, "that both the other Tibetan officials are foreign ministers? Is one the assistant?"

"Oh, no," Sherriff replied. "They're on the same level."

"Why two?" Crozier questioned.

"One's a monk, the other a layman," Sherriff responded. That's the way they do things here in Lhasa."

"Well, I'm certainly glad one of the group speaks English," Crozier remarked. "Makes me feel better. I'll be hopeful of better understanding."

"You'll like Ringang," Sherriff assured Crozier. He'll make you feel at ease. Foreigners feel at home

THE CREW IN THE DINKILINKA GARDEN IN LHASA

Left to right: Flight Officer Harold J. McCallum, copilot, Quincy, Massachusetts; Corporal Kenneth B. Spencer, radio operator, Rockville Center, Long Island, New York; First Lieutenant Robert B. Crozier, pilot, Waco, Texas; Private First Class John Huffman, passenger and assistant engineer, Straughn, Indiana; and Sergeant William Parram, crew chief, Tulsa, Oklahoma. Picture made by Chinese residents of Lhasa at the British Mission in December, 1943.

MEMBERS OF THE CREW, PARTIALLY IN TIBETAN DRESS, POSE WITH THEIR TIBETAN BENEFACTOR, SINOW ULLA, AT THE BRITISH MISSION IN LHASA

Left to right: Sergeant Parram, Corporal Spencer, Flight Officer McCallum, Sinow Ulla, Lieutenant Crozier, and Private First Class Huffman. Picture made by Chinese residents of Lhasa in December, 1943.

when they visit his house. He's friendly. Really enjoys his cup of *chang*. His wives are charming, too."

"Wives? How many does he have?"

"Two," Sherriff responded. "Sisters."

"How did he happen to marry sisters?"

"Of course, I don't know," Sherriff replied. "It's a family matter. I hear around here that the first Mrs. Ringang urged him to take the younger sister for a wife, also."

"Strange country," Crozier mused slowly. "The social order of Lhasa is interesting, but I'm afraid it wouldn't work in America. This Ringang seems to be an interesting fellow," he went on to Sherriff. "Is interpreting for the foreign ministers his regular job with the government?"

"Oh, no," Sherriff answered. "He interprets not only for all members of the cabinet but also for the Dalai Lama when necessary. Obviously, there's not enough of that type of duty to keep him busy, so he has other responsibilities with the government. He reads items in the Indian newspapers and the English press for the cabinet members. He's an official of the city of Lhasa, runs the hydroelectric installation for the city, and has charge of the Tibetan mint out north of town. Besides, he has a big estate in the southern part of the country."

"Well," Crozier responded, "as they say in the American Army, interpreting seems to be in addition to his other duties. You say he runs a hydroelectric plant. Is he an engineer?"

"Yes," Sherriff replied. "He became an engineer in England. He first went to England around 1912 or 1913 with three other Tibetan boys to study. He

returned to England again about 1921 for further education."

Sherriff cautioned Crozier that Ringang might have to appear quite formal on the occasion of his meeting with them.

"He may have to be careful not to appear too friendly," Sherriff said, "but, rest assured, he will be interested in your welfare."

"What are the names of the two foreign ministers?" Crozier asked.

"The name of the lay official," Sherriff replied, "is Surkhang Dzaza. The monk official's name is Luishahr Dzaza Lama. Surkhang is an older man and has been one of the foreign ministers for around forty years. Luishahr and Ringang are men of middle age."

"Well, Major," Crozier said as he wrote the names down in his notebook, "what else can you tell me that will help us to behave properly and seek the friendship of these people?"

"Show common courtesy, politeness, and respect, just as you would anywhere," Sherriff advised, "and make an effort to understand their point of view." Sherriff paused, then continued. "Perhaps I can instruct you in the polite way of drinking buttered tea," he said thoughtfully.

"We're listening," Crozier responded quickly for the group. "Will you continue, Major?"

"Etiquette demands you drink a third of your cup immediately," Sherriff advised them. "After that, each time the Tibetans take a drink, you also take a sip."

Crozier addressed the crew.

"Get that, men?" he questioned.

"Roger, Chief," McCallum replied, while the others nodded their understanding.

"I'm sure you chaps don't like butter in your tea," Sherriff said with playful yet dry understatement.

"We're used to it by now," Crozier replied with a grin.

"You might get tallow in your tea before you get out of Tibet," Sherriff warned. "Mutton fat is a common substitute for butter in tea among the Tibetans. Sometimes, I'm told, it is actually preferred. If you don't like butter in your tea, I hope you don't have to try tallow. I think I can safely say you won't be able to swallow it."

At this point, Sherriff was interrupted by a servant who came in. When he had gone, Sherriff announced to the airmen that the Tibetan foreign ministers, Ringang, and Dr. Kung, the Chinese commissioner who had welcomed them the day before, were coming in to see them. Soon, the four walked into the room, and Sherriff introduced the five Americans, who rose from their seats, bowed, and presented the ceremonial scarves to the Tibetans, who returned scarves of their own to the crew. The three Tibetans wore the rich, colorful, and costly garments of aristocrats. Luishahr Dzaza Lama was dressed in a red robe, with a shorter jacket-like garment of yellow, and tucked in the maroon robe at the neck was a scarf of yellow. On his wrist was a watch. Unlike the others he had on no headdress, and his hair was neatly cropped, burr style. His face was finely chiseled, his hands slim and delicate.

Surkhang Dzaza was much older and taller. He had wrinkles in his face and a scraggly, gray moustache and was dressed in a yellow silk robe with a bright red dash drawn tightly around a slender

waist. He had a white scarf tucked in the neck of his yellow robe, a silver charm box in his long plaited topknot of hair, and a long jeweled pendant hanging from his left ear.

Ringang was a short, thickset man between forty and fifty, inclined to corpulence. He wore a robe of dark purple broadcloth, held in at the waist with a yellow sash. Over this was a scarlet gown with a sky-blue lining. His hair, which was long, was bound with a red ribbon, and on his head he wore a yellow, bowllike hat which looked as if it were made of sponge.

Surkhang Dzaza and Luishahr Dzaza Lama welcomed the airmen through Ringang and told them in the same breath that a caravan was being prepared to take them back to India, which they expected to be ready within a few days. They expressed regret for the attack of the mob and told them that police and soldiers were sent to defend them when the angry crowd formed.

At that moment, a servant brought in butter tea, and everyone present drank several cups of the scalding-hot beverage, the airmen following Sherriff's previous advice on the Tibetan etiquette of tea drinking.

Crozier expressed fear through Ringang that Parram would not be able to travel because of the condition of his feet.

Surkhang and Luishahr regretted they had to express concern for the safety of the crew and said the government might not be able to hold crowds in check. They said all crewmen who were able to travel toward India must leave with the caravan. If some member of the expedition were not able to

travel, the government would arrange to hide him safely in Lhasa till he could.

"Pardon me, Lieutenant Crozier," Parram said when Ringang had finished interpreting this, "but I want to travel with you and the others. Perhaps, in a few more days I'll be able to wear boots or shoes. If I can't, I got here in socks, and if I have to I can get back to India that way. Please, sir, I don't want you to leave me here. I want to travel all of us together."

"I thought you would," Sherriff interrupted. "The decision, of course, is up to your lieutenant here."

"Of course, you can go with us if you want to," Crozier said. "You made it all right coming in, and with a few days of rest and attention, you ought to make it out all right."

After a few more minutes of casual conversation and pleasantries, Surkhang, Luishahr, and Dr. Kung left, wishing the Americans a pleasant journey. Ringang remained for a while at Dinkilinka. As soon as the others were gone, he appeared more relaxed.

"You have been placed under my immediate charge insofar as the Tibetan government are concerned," Ringang told Crozier. "You are my responsibility. I shall visit you daily and I look forward to the occasions when we may have tea and talk together. I advise you to leave Lhasa as quickly as possible after we have transport ready, as the people can get out of hand. A popular song already is being sung in Lhasa telling how the gods have defeated the flying foreigners."

After Ringang departed, Crozier thought of Sinow Ulla.

"Why do you suppose Sinow Ulla didn't come?" he asked Sherriff. "We wanted to see him."

"Perhaps he'll come in later today. We'll see that you see him before you get away," Sherriff replied. "But now let's get down to the business of planning your journey back to India. First, you'll need money."

"Well, at least Tibet's no different from any other country in that respect," Crozier responded. "It takes money to make the mare go anywhere, and we don't have any, that's a cinch. We need plenty just to pay for what's already been done for us. We've been a great deal of expense to Sinow Ulla and the government."

"I'll get you whatever you need through reverse lend-lease," Sherriff said. "We have British funds here in Lhasa. I can get silver rupees for you. That's what you'll want traveling on the track from here to India. How much do you think you'll need?"

"Haven't the faintest notion," Crozier said.

"We'll work it out," Sherriff responded.

They talked for half an hour on the subject and ended by agreeing that five thousand rupees would get them back to Calcutta, as well as pay the expenses of Sinow Ulla in Tsetang. Before they were ready to leave, Sherriff promised, they would have five thousand silver rupees packed in a box.

"It's a lot of weight," Crozier said, "but I guess it's necessary when people don't appreciate anything but hard money."[2]

The conference broke up, with Crozier and his crew going back to their Dinkilinka quarters.

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[2] Lowell Thomas, Jr., on page 320 of *Out of This World* (The Greystone Press, New York, 1950), advised travelers to take paper money. He and his father found that times had changed. People wanted Indian paper rupees. Today, Chinese currency has displaced Tibetan coinage, and Indian rupees are banned.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THAT AFTERNOON, SHERRIFF CALLED them into a huddle again and told them Ringang was coming for dinner with them that night. At the dinner, Sherriff said, Ringang would ask them to leave town after daylight on the morning set for departure so the people could see them go.

"Well, at least we'll get to see a little more of the town," Crozier responded.

"Yeah," McCallum said with disappointment, "I wanted to see all the town."

"All of us would like to see it," Crozier answered, "but that's out now. The town wouldn't like to see us."

"Precisely, Lieutenant," Sherriff agreed. "No tours of Lhasa, you know. The government won't permit it. You've seen most of it, at any rate. I can tell you about it if you wish. It's not a very big town —about two miles long from east to west and a mile from north to south. There's not much on the western side except the Potala. The eastern half is the main city. Not a big town—about twenty thousand people live here, but it's the capital city of a country which has an estimated two to four million people.[1]

[1] The 1953 population of Lhasa is reported as seventy thousand by George B. Cressey, Maxwell Professor of Geography at Syracuse University, on page 341 of his geography of China, *Land of the 500 Million* (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1955). *Webster's Geographical Dictionary* (G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts, 1963), reports it as fifty thousand. The city's population is listed as twenty thousand by Tsung-lien Shen and Shen-chi Liu on page 64 of *Tibet and the Tibetans* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1953). The late Sir Basil Gould, former political officer for the government of India, in his memoirs, *The Jewel in*

We are on the extreme western edge of the city."

"Too bad we can't see it," Spencer spoke up. "I'd like to tell the folks back in Rockville Center all about this town. Chances are none of 'em will ever get up here."

Sherriff told them the city was bordered with a "holy walk" named the Linkor, about six miles in length. On the north side of town, it ran behind the Potala; on the east, through the edge of the downtown market section; on the south, near the *linka* or parklike area of the Kyi River; and on the west, near the British Mission compound where they were staying.

"In places, it is only a small, rough path," Sherriff said. "It's better on the south side, near the river, among the poplar and willow trees."

Sherriff told them that followers of Lamaism, most of them poor pilgrims from far away, often prostrate their bodies full-length over and over again until they cover every inch of the Linkor's six miles, ending this arduous task covered with dust—and in their minds—merit, in the sight of the gods.

"Does Linkor have any meaning in English?" one of the airmen asked.

"Yes," Sherriff replied. "It means the 'Outside

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the Lotus, published by Chatto and Windus, London, 1957, says the population of Lhasa is forty thousand. William McGovern, on page 338 of *To Lhasa in Disguise* (The Century Company, New York, 1924), states the population as twenty thousand. Foreigners of both Western and Eastern origin seem not to agree on the size of the population, even though some of them have lived in Lhasa for long periods. The truth is that the population of Lhasa varies by many thousands in any year. At the time of the Tibetan New Year, the ingress of monks and pilgrims into the city increases the population temporarily to its biggest annual figure—four or five times the normal amount. One Chinese Communist report has listed the population as a hundred thousand. The Red imperialists probably are handing out figures on the population at the time of the Tibetan New Year and including the thousands of troops they have quartered in the city since occupying it.

Circle,' although it isn't a circle in the strict sense of the word—just an irregularly shaped road which runs around the town."[2]

"There are other circles in Lhasa, too," Sherriff went on. "You came through one of them on the way out here. It's rather a broad street, an irregular sort of square called the Barkor which means 'Middle Circle.' It's about a mile in length. In the center of the Barkor is a building called the Central Cathedral. Inside its compound, which also houses government offices, is the Nankor or 'Inside Circle.' Both the Barkor and Nankor are also holy walks."

The Central Cathedral, Sherriff said, was called the Jokhang or House of the Lord by the Tibetans. It had an image of Lord Buddha inside it, which the people believed Gautama Siddhartha the Buddha had carved in his youth, more than five hundred years before Christ was born. The Tibetans believed this idol, which they addressed as "Lord," could speak to them, also. From what Sherriff told the aircrew, the people crowd into the dark, gloomy temple, lit by butter lamps instead of windows, mingling their living forms in the flickering shadows with the lifeless form of Lord Buddha and the brother and sister idols and mice that have kept him long company.

"Nobody ever harms the mice," Sherriff said, "as they are believed by many to have been gods, lamas, or holy creatures of some sort in their former lives."

The airmen learned that the Tibetans considered the Barkor sacred, even though they didn't keep it very clean. Crozier remembered, when they were attacked by the mob of Lhasaites, that the street was

[2] From Sir Charles Bell's discussion in *The People of Tibet* (Oxford University Press, London, 1928), a translation likely more suitable in the minds of Tibetans would be "Park Circle."

unpaved, dirty, and full of refuse. From the odors which reached his nostrils, he concluded it was used for a public lavatory as well as a thoroughfare. Sherriff said the people of Lhasa and pilgrims from other parts of Tibet thronged the Barkor in the evening, walking around the square to earn consideration for Lamaism's bright eternity, free of all the cares under heaven.

As Sherriff talked, Crozier thought about his far-off native Texas, where farm and ranch people used to walk around the countyseat squares on Saturday afternoons, resting from their labors of the week and seeking recreation by talking to neighbors of town and countryside. He remembered a night he had spent in Monterrey, in Mexico, one time, where he watched the young men and girls strolling around the Plaza Zaragoza in opposite directions, their object being romantic interest. Here, in this square on top of the world, crowds also strolled, not for beaus and the association of old friends, but for religious merit in the life to come.

Crozier remembered seeing goods piled up for sale in the middle of the Barkor, and Sherriff told the airmen there was also a variety in its stores and stalls, including American cosmetics, and perhaps now and then soap, or even a record by American crooners, all accompanied by endless bargaining and haggling on the part of buyer and seller, just as in India. From the Barkor to the east end of town was the commercial district, the streets thronged with men, yaks, horses, and mules. And through the narrow, winding streets no wheeled vehicles of any kind rolled. The street dogs were always huge and frightening, Sherriff said, and the Tibetans usually calm, fun-loving, and friendly. They liked to gamble, and

like people almost anywhere, loved parties and picnics.

That evening at a dinner at Dinkilinka, Ringang announced that the caravan to take the crew back to India would be ready to move on December 19, so next day they began making preparations for their departure. Ringang brought three soldiers of the Tibetan army and explained that they would be furnished as guides, escorts, and guards for the journey ahead. The crew had photographs made with Major and Mrs. Sherriff, Doc Bo, Sinow Ulla, and some of the Chinese dignitaries, and Sherriff gave them pictures of the Potala.

It was normally a journey of two to four weeks back to India, even in summer, and now, with the winter wind howling like a demon across the high peaks and slapping at poor travelers' faces with cold wrath, it could be longer, depending on what fate had in store for them.

"You never can tell what winter will be like in Tibet," Sherriff told them. "Between Lhasa and the borders of India, when the wind is in the north, it is very cold; but there is little rain or snow. If the wind blows from the south, the snow is usually heavy."

They talked to the Tibetan soldiers assigned to them, rested, ate, and stowed gear they would need on the narrow, precipitous mountain trails, as Crozier wanted to make it as quickly as possible. Going by muleback, or yak-pack, the only two means of transportation, in the dead of winter was nothing to look forward to with great expectations; but they wanted to break all records for the journey if possible.

The day before they left, they saw Sinow Ulla, their kind benefactor of Tsetang, for the last time. When he came inside the Dinkilinka compound with Ringang, he apologized to his former guests for the way they were treated at the hands of the mob and expressed disappointment in the people of Lhasa.

Crozier asked Ringang to find out how much Sinow Ulla had spent on the crew, as he wanted to pay their friend from Tsetang, now that he had sufficient funds to take care of the bill. Ringang and Sinow Ulla talked back and forth in Tibetan for several minutes. Finally, Ringang turned to Crozier.

"There's quite a bit of it," he said. "I think we should get it down on paper. He mentions clothing, tea, food—even matches."

Sherriff turned to a typewriter on a nearby table, sat down, and inserted a sheet of thin white paper in the machine.

"Miscellaneous expenditure incurred for the American airmen," he wrote at the top of the page, then asked Ringang to list everything, item by item, and give him the amount in Tibetan money. Before calling out each item, Ringang got the information from Sinow Ulla, who read in Tibetan from long, narrow sheets of paper. Ringang then gave that item to Sherriff in English. When they had completed the itemized statement and totaled it, Sherriff dated it "Lhasa, Tibet, the 18th December 1943," and when Sinow Ulla apparently could not write his name, Sherriff typed it at the bottom of the sheet of paper, marking it as being signed.

"You owe Sinow Ulla one thousand, five hundred and eighteen *sangs* and six *shos*," Sherriff said as he

Miscellaneous expenditure incurred for the American airmen.

Cost of 5 hats.	265	sangs.		
" 5 chubba	740	"		
" 5 chuktos.	350	"		
" 5 socks.	25	"		
" 2 packets tea.	22	"		
" 6 seers sugar.	60	"		
" one packet candle.	6	"		
" two yak tail ropes.	8	"	5	shos.
" Potatoes.	7	"	5	"
" Vegetables.	1	"	5	"
" Flour.	15	"		
" Mustard oil.	6	"		
" Ghur.	3	"	6	"
" Tibetan paper.	1	"	5	"
" Paid to boatmen.	4	"		
" six matches.	3	"		
Total	1518	sangs	6	shos.

= Rs 506/—

Dated Lhasa, Tibet.
The 18th December 1943.

Sd. Sana Ullah.

Received from Chinese & Tibetans. 11 Poles. 13 sangs. = 563 sangs = Rs 188/-.

PHOTOSTAT OF SINOW ULLA'S LIST OF EXPENDITURES

pulled the sheet out of the typewriter and handed it to Crozier.

"Major," Crozier responded with a grin, "you'll have to let me have that in Indian rupees."

"Oh, yes," Sherriff said in apologetic tones. "Sorry."

He took the paper back and reached for his fountain pen.

"Before you figure it, Major," Crozier interjected hurriedly, "I also want to get down on paper what we owe the Chinese and some of the Tibetans with them. I asked Dr. Kung and he said that Rupees 188 would cover it. I'll leave that amount with you to give him in case we don't see him again."

"Right," Sherriff responded, making entries on the statement with his pen. He glanced up at Crozier.

"Your debt to Sinow Ulla can be settled for Rupees 506, making a total of Rupees 694 for both Tibetans and Chinese."

When Crozier found that Sinow Ulla had spent more than five hundred rupees on the welfare of himself and his crew, he authorized the first expenditure from the brand-new box of five thousand silver rupees he had received from Sherriff. Sinow Ulla departed with fifteen hundred of the silver coins, and as he walked out of the compound, Crozier's heart was heavy, for he and the others knew that, had it not been for the friendship of this little man with the dark, inscrutable face, their bones possibly would have bleached in some bleak corner of this remote land.[3]

The aircrew had another purpose in being gener-

[3] Sinow Ulla died the following year, 1944, of pneumonia, according to a letter Crozier received from Major Sherriff.

ous with Sinow Ulla. If the airmen gave him an extra-large bonus, they knew that word would get out to the people; in fact, Sinow Ulla promised to spread the word in all the villages he journeyed through or visited. Of course, this altruism was to secure good treatment for any other airman who might crash or jump in the area.[4]

After Ringang said farewell to the crew, Sherriff and Crozier walked over to the large map of Tibet on the wall, talking of the gift of added rupees to Sinow Ulla.

"You made him a happy man," Sherriff said. "Also a bit proud, I think, of having helped you chaps. The rupee is sought after in Tibet."

"It's the same way in China," Crozier responded. "Especially, they want hundred-rupee notes. They bring a better rate than American dollars."

"The average Tibetan wants the silver rupees," said Sherriff. "Paper money isn't practical in Tibet. For instance, many would see no difference between a ten-rupee and a hundred-rupee note. To them, added naughts mean nothing. Rather hard to convince them more zeros denote any added value."

At the big wall map, Sherriff again went over the crew's intended route back to India, presented Crozier with a folded chart, and had him take ample notes. He asked Crozier if he felt he could depend on the soldiers Tibet was sending back with them to the borders of Sikkim.

"If you say so," Crozier replied without hesitation. "Ringang brought them to us, and we got ac-

[4] In doing this, Crozier was carrying out Air Force policy. Salt and silver rupees were the principal awards to the hill tribes of northeastern India and north Burma, who helped many fallen American airmen. Aircrews wore jackets with Chinese flags and pictographs on their backs in case they jumped or crashed in China.

quainted after a fashion. We found one could speak a little English."

"You can depend on the soldiers the Lhasa government have selected as your guides and protectors," Sherriff vouchsafed. "Yes, one can speak some English. That won't be of special service to you probably, but maybe it will help ease the tedium of the trail at times."

On December 19, they pulled out early, being careful to comply with the request of Ringang that they not depart until daylight, so the people of Lhasa could see them go. Like most caravans moving from Lhasa on the trade route to India, theirs consisted of mules. They took no yaks because the animals were not able to go down into the low, warm valleys in Sikkim, near the borders of India. In addition to the five Americans, the three Tibetan soldiers and a cook went along, everyone riding mules.

The cook, who was highly recommended by Sherriff, earlier had refused to take pay for his services on the journey. To show that he took the occasion seriously he turned up for the journey with clean face and hands, new boots, and a splendid fur cap. Since the Americans seldom could call his name—and it was too much of a mouthful when they could—they charitably referred to him as "Duncan Hines," after their country's famous judge of what is good in food and restaurants. Duncan, in the days that followed, never discovered—because of the language barrier—that his pot-walloping rather cast a blight on his honorary moniker in the minds of the foreigners who ate his fare. But he proved devoted, faithful, and worthy of comradeship—and since the provisions he had were few—the crew emerged from Tibet ready to accord him a culinary cheer anyhow.

FOUR OF THE FIVE AMERICANS POSE WITH MAJOR AND MRS. GEORGE SHERRIFF AND DUNCAN, THE COOK, IN THE DINKILINKA GARDEN

Left to right: Spencer, Mrs. Sherriff, Duncan, Sherriff, Parram, Crozier, McCallum, and an unidentified Chinese. Picture made at the British Mission in Lhasa in December, 1943, by Private First Class John Huffman.

MEMBERS OF THE CREW POSE WITH TWO AIR FORCE OFFICERS AT CALCUTTA AFTER THEIR RETURN FROM TIBET

Standing, left to right: Huffman; De Carlo, public relations officer at Dum Dum Air Base; Colonel McGregor, the Dum Dum commander; Crozier. *Kneeling, left to right:* McCallum, Spencer, Parram. Photograph made in January, 1944, at Dum Dum, Calcutta, by the Air Force.

The Tibetan soldiers showed up for the journey in regular Tibetan boots, *chupas*, and slouchy, wide-brimmed, British-style felt hats. The tallest of the three, who was leader, had been to India in earlier years, where he acquired a gold tooth in exchange for ample rupees, and now he had a glittering, yellow smile. The crew at first named him "Golden Boy," but later cast that out for "Fort Knox," in honor of the U.S. Treasury's gold-storage cache at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The name stuck. One of the two other soldiers had a Tibetan name meaning Thunderbolt, and since he wore a perpetual frown, Spencer began calling him "Rain." The third rifleman, who smiled as much as his comrade frowned, Spencer christened "Shine." Crozier already had found it very impolite to call people by name in Tibet if they possessed a title of any kind, so he began addressing the soldiers directly as "*La*," a general term of respect he had learned. Fort Knox already was speaking to Crozier as "Kusho Sahib" and "Kusho Crosho."[5]

Extra mules packed their gear and food, the latter consisting of yak and goat meat, a yak-hair bag of barley flour, a yak skin of rice, two large sheepskin bags of butter with patches of wool still on them, a bamboo tea churn, and peas for the mules. They didn't start out with enough food for the entire journey, but planned to buy slaughtered goats, sheep, or yaks along the way.

As they walked out the door of Dinkilinka's main house toward their mounts, Sherriff and Fox, the mission radio operator, went with them. Sherriff shook hands with Crozier.

[5] *Kusho* is an honorific form of address applied to officials, or men of aristocratic rank.

"I say, Texas," he said with a smile, "send me some of your American cigarettes—you know, the Texas-size ones. Seriously, good luck. You shouldn't have any trouble."

"We'll never forget you," Crozier replied. "On behalf of all of us, I say thanks for everything to you, Mrs. Sherriff, Sinow Ulla, and all the rest."

"When you start flying the mountains again," Fox said, "call me on the plane radio. We'd like to keep in touch. Spencer and I talked over the technical details."

"Roger, AC4YN," Spencer replied. "Thanks for everything, Mr. Fox."

"We'll call you and we'll write," Crozier added.

They mounted their mules and rode outside the compound toward the road, which would lead them west past the walled Norbulinka, the park containing the Dalai Lama's summer residence. Inside the Dinkilinka, they had not been able to see the Potala because the Iron Hill, on which the Medical College rested, blocked the view.

Out on the road, before they turned their faces toward the southwest and India, they gazed up at the massive palace of the little boy who was a god, then down to the western gate of Lhasa, an archway cut through a gold-topped *chorten.* This *chorten* and two others, one on the Iron Hill and another on the Red Hill, were high as a five-story building, with prayer flags fluttering from lines connecting the topmost spire of each. A group of men and mules was clustered around the gate which opened through the middle *chorten.* The road down to the gate was smoothly paved, and beside it on either side grew three bare, leafless trees, stunted and starved in the thin, cold mountain air. Farther back on both sides

were naked, denuded trees that must have been restful, shaded groves in summer.

Pounding the sides of their mules with the heels of their Tibetan boots, they departed the Forbidden City in the opposite direction, with the Dalai Lama's rock-walled Jewel Park on their left.

It was a dry day of blue sky and bright sunshine, with a cutting west wind blowing through their whiskers. They had let their beards grow for several days, as they felt that hairy faces would help to temper the gales they might encounter across this wild hermit land on the top side of the clouds.

"Well, gang," Crozier lifted his voice as they rode away, "who's for India?"

"All aboard for the Land of Worthy Oriental Gentlemen," McCallum shouted.

"Good-bye," Spencer said, doffing his headgear toward the Potala.

"Nice to be close to the sky," Parram said, "and still be on the ground. But as for me, I'll take it a little nearer sea level."

"We got some humps in front of us yet," Huffman counseled.

"That's right," Crozier agreed. "We may have to jump off these mules if we run out of hay."

"That's okay," McCallum said. "It's a dead cinch a mule stays closer to the ground than a plane."

"But there's one drawback about mules," Spencer observed. "They carry no parachutes. Not a chance to be let down easy."

"Kusho Crosho, go for India," Fort Knox added, determined to join the conversation.

"Right," Crozier agreed. "We go for India if we have to break our damned necks doing it."

CHAPTER TWELVE

AS THEY WENDED THEIR WAY ON OUT the road, Crozier glanced back again at the Potala and the medical college on the Iron Hill, both of them casting long shadows on the valley floor from the early sun. They were already warming up inside their *chupas*. Turning his head again to the fore, Crozier saw a bright roof above some winter-stripped trees on a little hill. Around this golden-topped temple, which was about three stories high, was a cluster of small buildings, with three gates leading into a courtyard in the foreground. He thought it might be the monastic headquarters of the government Oracle, which Sherriff told him he would ride past.[1]

Crozier pointed to the gleaming yellow top of the temple, then turned in his saddle to McCallum.

"When the government has a thorny problem," he said, "it comes to the guy who lives here for advice, Sherriff told me. But before this guy gives the government any dope, he goes into a trance."

"Yeah? Do you suppose he told them what to do about us?" McCallum asked.

"Could be," Crozier replied. "The gods are supposed to speak to the government through him. That way the people get the very best advice from the most high."

"Yeah," McCallum mumbled with good-natured cynicism, "straight from the horse's mouth."

[1] The State Oracle is a human medium who offers official counsel, guidance, and prophecy to the government while in a trance.

"Sherriff told me about a couple of other oracles," Crozier went on. "One's a sort of weatherman who lives here in Lhasa. The government calls on him to prevent hailstorms and the like, the way I understand it. I believe the god who speaks to him is called the Wooden Bird God."

"Wouldn't want the job," McCallum spoke with mock decisiveness. "Afraid I might lose it after the first hailstorm. You'd have less luck with it in Texas, Skipper, than I would in Massachusetts."

"Why?" Crozier grinned.

"Hell, all those tornadoes?" McCallum asked. "After one of those, you'd sure be among the unemployed. Who's this other oracle Major Sherriff told you about?"

"He's down the trail here a ways," Crozier responded, "at the first place we stop for the night. Guess you'd call him the mad-dog oracle. Sort of a monk doctor. Has a good reputation for curing rabies while in a trance."

"How does he do it?"

"He starts out doing it with mirrors," Crozier replied. "Takes a looking glass and finds an infected spot, punctures the place with a hollow needle and sucks out pus and blood till a piece of flesh shaped like a dog comes out with it. He spits the whole thing into a bowl and then drinks it."

"Swallows the evidence, eh?" McCallum commented. He paused. "Well, Chief, all I got to say is I hope I don't get dogbit anywhere near this guy's town."

At that moment, Fort Knox, with his gold tooth gleaming in a wide grin, swung speedily from his saddle beneath a large willow at the side of the road.

He pointed to a little pool of water, from which a trickle flowed in the direction they were going.

"*Kau, kau,*" he cried, bringing out his charm box and opening it. From it he took a small disk, apparently made from molded white clay. He pointed to the small flow of water, to a swastika on the box, and showed Crozier the image of a Buddha stamped on the disk.[2]

"Luck, luck, Kusho Sahib," Fort Knox nodded happily. "Luck, luck, luck," he kept repeating as he mounted back astride his mule.

"He sees some sort of good sign," Crozier remarked for all to hear as they got under way again. Good luck, good luck," he repeated as he too smiled and nodded his head at the optimistic Fort Knox.

A short distance down the road, they passed a house where men were slaughtering animals, the meat hanging outside in the dry, cold air. A girl came walking toward them with the carcass of a sheep on her back, and as she passed them, she held up a thumb, stuck out her tongue, and sucked in her breath, to show her politeness and respect.

As he gazed at the slaughtered yaks and sheep, Crozier had inward qualms about the meat he was to buy down the road. His stomach became a little unsettled as he recalled how he learned about a Tibetan custom at Dinkilinka.

"Say, were you with me when Sherriff—or the Chinese, I don't remember who exactly—told me how the butchering and undertaking business is combined in Tibet?" Crozier asked McCallum, reining his mule in closely.

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[2] *Kau* is the Tibetan word for the charm boxes Tibetan people wear. The disk which the Tibetan soldier showed Crozier probably had mixed in with the clay the ground bones of some departed lama.

"Nope, didn't hear that one," McCallum said drily. "Give me something else to tell my grandchildren about."

"Passing those Tibetans dressing that meat made me think of it," Crozier continued. "I suppose they're the bunch of low-caste Joes who do the job," he said, half to himself.

"Well, where does the funeral business come in?" McCallum asked.

"The way Sherriff, or somebody, told it to me," Crozier said, "the low caste boys who butcher the meat also dispose of the dead bodies under direction of the monks."

McCallum stared in disbelief.

"You mean those guys bury the dead, too?" he asked.

"They don't bury anything!" Crozier replied firmly. "They cut up the human bodies same as they would the carcass of a yak or sheep and feed the pieces to the vultures, dogs, and hogs."[3]

"Ye gods," McCallum said under his breath. "They go the Parsis down in India one better. I've seen the 'Towers of Silence' in Bombay and Calcutta, with

[3] Two of the classes of people that dismember the bodies are called *tamden* and *ragyaba*. In Lhasa, the *ragyaba* corpse-cutters live in odd huts made of the horns of yaks, sheep, or goats, plastered together with adobe clay, or mortar. Relatives don't go to the corpse-cutting grounds. If the family can afford the expense, monks go with the bodies to ward off vultures while dismemberment is being performed, to pray, and to comfort the spirit of the dead. Other monks may be hired to show the spirit the way to go through the limbo of after-life, known as *bardo*, on the way to the next birth. Not all corpses are dismembered. There is some burial and cremation, but frozen, stony ground and lack of fuel prevent these as wide-spread custom. Bodies are thrown in streams. A few high lamas are embalmed at death and the bodies covered with gold leaf and placed in temples as idols. Sometimes the remains of a venerated lama are placed in a *chorten*, cremated or uncremated. If cremated, revered images may be fashioned from his ashes.

the buzzards flying 'round the top picking at the corpses."[4]

"Yep, they're kinder to the vultures than the Parsis," Crozier said. "Give them a helping hand, so to speak."

"What the hell do they do with the bones?" McCallum asked.

"Pound them up and mix them with the flesh," Crozier replied. "Sometimes they mix them up with barley flour, the way I heard it—that is, all except the skulls and thighbones."

"What do they do with them?"

"Well," Crozier continued, "when they find good specimens, these boys who break up the bodies sell them to the monasteries."

"What in the name of God for?" the astounded McCallum asked.

"They make drums out of the skulls," Crozier responded, "and trumpets out of the thighbones. The better the specimen, the higher the price. If the specimens aren't good, they don't fool with them."

"What in the name of thunder makes a good specimen?"

"Well, I don't know about skulls—or if I heard, I've forgotten it. But, the way Sherriff, or somebody, told me, the thighbones of tall men are preferred because they make a better tone. I heard a story at Dinkilinka," Crozier went on, "about a tall, skinny Indian who died in Lhasa while on a pilgrimage. When they cut up his body, his thighbones brought a premium price."

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[4] The Parsis, a sect originally from Persia, dispose of the dead by placing cadavers on tall towers for the vultures. Many Parsi families are among India's wealthy industrialists.

McCallum thought awhile, then answered archly with an amused, saturnine grin:

"Well, Chief, you're a mighty tall Texan, and if you die over here, I'll donate your thighbones to the monks. What better finish could you have than to end up in the orchestra and have your horn tooted till the end of time?"

"Let's hope nobody gets the meat-market and funeral business mixed up when we sit down to eat," Crozier commented with a sigh of philosophical resignation.

"Well, I'll be wondering about that yak backbone we get down the road," McCallum said.

Crozier turned his head back toward Spencer, Parram, and Huffman, who were several paces behind.

"Let's don't tell them till we get back to India—if and when we do," he said. "Might not aid their digestion."

"Check," said McCallum. "Roger. Hell, Skipper, those Army cooks look good to me now."

Just a short distance out of town they were surprised to cross the Kyi River on a modern steel bridge, the last thing they expected to see in this land of ferries and yak-hide boats. Crozier wondered how they ever got the steel beams into the heart of Tibet. He learned later they were packed in from the outside world on animals, like everything else.

About five or six miles outside Lhasa, on a good stretch of road thronged with yaks, mules, and men, most of them going toward the city, they came to a long wall at the base of a mountain, behind which they saw, elevated in rows up the slopes, the imposing buildings of the Rice Heap Monastery, largest in the world. Inside the white masonry walls of the

Rice Heap dwelled ten thousand monks, and they saw some of them moving about outside in the crisp, clear air.

After they rounded the mountain, losing sight of the great cluster of buildings at the Rice Heap, they passed cliffs on which a giant seated Buddha and other images were drawn and carved in bas-relief, some in rich colors. They climbed a small ridge, on which they found a huge, man-made pile of stones. In keeping with Tibetan custom, they dismounted to add their share to it, and there, about eight miles from the city, they got their last view of Lhasa.

Ahead of them was cultivated, irrigated barley land and behind them was the Tibetan capital. From where they sat astride their mules, they saw the rays of the early winter sun falling on it. The Potala stood high on its hill, far above the tree-shrouded cluster of buildings below it, a strangely incongruous, skyscraping fortress. On the Potala's roof, the light flashed faintly on the gold tiles above the tombs of the Dalai Lama's old reincarnations.

Taking a last look, they turned their heads southwest toward the borders of India. The journey ahead of them, three hundred and fifty to four hundred miles to Darjeeling, was like four thousand most anywhere else in the world, with only a rough, winding, badly defined track to follow. They hoped to make it in two weeks, about twice as fast as the average trade caravan time. Had they been in their plane, they could have covered the distance in an hour easily, as a direct line overland from Lhasa to Darjeeling is about two hundred and fifty miles.

The wind rose from the west about midmorning and blew continually. As the day advanced, the wind became mercilessly cold, hitting them full in their

faces as they trudged south and west. They passed through two or three small villages filled with miserable hovels. At one, Nytang, the people also lived in caves, cooking on yak-dung fires in front of them. As they rode through the villages and along the trail, Duncan Hines, the Tibetan cook, speared each piece of dried yak dung he saw with a long fork and flung it into a basket he carried on his saddle.

As the bitter cold day wore on, Crozier looked forward to the hard floor of a peasant's mud house as something next to Stateside comfort. The cold wind brought the temperature from just around freezing at Lhasa, early in the morning, to below zero at Chushul, late in the day. Fort Knox sent Rain and Shine on ahead to Chushul to arrange for their coming, and they followed on a trail surrounded by meadows.

It was getting late when they rode into the town through wide barley fields, about a mile from where the Kyi River empties into the Tsangpo. They had come about forty miles down the Kyi from Lhasa. Here they were back on their old familiar waterway, the Brahmaputra, nearly seventy miles upstream westward from where Sinow Ulla took them in at Tsetang.[5] The town was the usual collection of rock and clay houses, about fifty or sixty of them. Here they also found willow trees, as they had at Lhasa.

The town itself was on a ledge of rocks, below a sharp ridge which rose between it and the Tsangpo, even here a mighty river, though far from being the monstrous, muddy Brahmaputra it becomes in

[5] It should be remembered that the Tsangpo and the Brahmaputra are the same river. Tibetans call it the Tsangpo; to the Indians it is the Brahmaputra. While in Tibet, Crozier and his crew usually referred to it as the Brahmaputra, after they learned its identity.

the Assam Valley of India. It was hard for Crozier to realize this was the same river which flowed by his base at Jorhat. Perched upon the rocky ridge was a gray old fort, typical of many Tibetan towns. The cliff below this mediaeval ruin dropped straight as a plumb bob to a sandy stretch which led to the dark confluence of the Kyi and Tsangpo.

The house to which the soldiers led them was filthy, but they slept the sleep of the weary on this first night out from Lhasa. They would spend four more nights before they reached Gyantse, the midway point to India, if they could keep to their schedule. From Gyantse, they would have the finer accommodations of dak bungalows, built by the British for travelers in these uplands of Asia.

They were up with the sun next morning, and after a breakfast of black *rotee*, cold mutton, and yak-butter tea, they took to the trail, which was cut into a high cliff above the Tsangpo. The mules picked their way carefully over the stones on this dangerous road, and after a few miles, the track ran over sections of the north bank of the river, which apparently had once been boggy. It probably had been muddy when the river was high in the summer wet season. They did not see the immense stretch of boulders on the bed of the Tsangpo here, such as they did when they first glimpsed the river at Tsetang.

In a few more miles, over a sandy stretch, they came to a bend in the river where they saw a village on the south bank. Drawn up on their side of the stream were huge, awkward-looking yak-hide boats with boatmen of weather-beaten, tarnished-copper skin. All looked evil enough to drown the whole company in the middle of the river for a rupee, but de-

spite their appearance, they turned out to be polite, with protruding tongues and gasping intakes of breath.

Drawn up to the shore also was a huge rectangular, flat-bottomed ferry, built of wood and half-full of water. It was Crozier's idea to lease this to take the mules across the brown, muddy torrent; but Fort Knox had other ideas. He scorned use of the ferry, making a deal with two tough-looking boatmen, one to row, and the other to hold the head-ropes of the mules as they swam along behind.

It must have taken a dozen yak skins stitched together to cover the wooden ribs of the boat they rented, which was about twelve feet long. The stern was narrow, the bow at least half as wide as the vessel was long, and the bottom was flat. Both Tibetan boatmen sat in the stern, one with long paddles, the other to hold the mules.

The airmen were surprised when they found the boat would take all their caravan and gear in one trip, although it weighed less than a hundred pounds. It hardly sank into the water, despite the big load. They were not surprised to find it tough and river-worthy, though, as they had observed such boats as these at Tsetang.

After they loaded everything, one of the boatmen brought up a goat and placed him aboard.

"What's the old bastard taking the goat for?" one of the men asked.

"Search me!" replied another one of the crew.[6]

When they attempted to glide out into the cold water from the shelf of ice near the shore, the mules

[6] The goat is taken to carry the boatman's belongings when the boat is swept downstream by the current on its crossing to the far bank. The boatman must walk back upstream on the far side, carrying his boat.

began objecting in traditional mulish ways—raising their ears nervously, holding back skittishly, and kicking whatever came to hoof. One of them broke away, burning the boatman's hand with the rope, and Fort Knox sent Rain and Shine on the double after him. Recovered and led alongside his fellows, the mule nervously followed them into the writhing eddies behind the craft.

The river was not turbulent near the bank at their point of crossing, and they glided smoothly along, silently and with speed, the current moving them downstream. With the stronger current in the middle, however, the Tibetan oarsman had some trouble, the force of the water swinging the boat in all directions. The recalcitrant mule again broke away, and as luck would have it, he struck out for the far shore. The boatmen then turned the whole herd loose and the animals followed. As the boat spun around, Crozier thought the sun seemed to be moving, now north, now west, now south, now east. He cast his eyes to the bottom of the boat to stop the spinning in his head. The oarsman rowed the boat gradually out of the center current and began moving in toward the south shore. As soon as it scraped shore ice, a half-mile downstream, the Tibetans were out on the sandy beach unloading everything beneath an overhanging cliff. The mules, close by, stumbled up on the shore behind and beside the coracle, shaking the cold water from their hides.

"It's a damned good thing that the mule that broke loose decided not to swim back," McCallum said wearily.

"I sure wouldn't want to row back after him," Spencer said, "even though he's my mule. I'd as soon walk the rest of the way to India as cross that

river two more times, especially trying to get a suspicious mule to go along with me."

"Wasn't much danger of his going back," Crozier said with assurance, "since he was more than halfway across. He'd be a pretty stupid mule not to swim the shortest distance."

"Well, you ought to know," McCallum said, "since you're from Texas and know all about mule skinning. What does it take to make a mule skinner anyway, Skipper?"

"That's easy," Crozier replied tartly. "The man's got to have more sense than the mule."

All the crew laughed, Fort Knox and Shine joining in the merriment, certainly more out of politeness than understanding. Rain and Duncan, the cook, looked as tragic as if the mule had been lost.

"These skin boats give me an idea when I get back to Texas," Crozier started up again. "Cowhide is plentiful down there. Think I'll go in the boat business. 'Take a cowhide craft on your vacation' would be a good advertising slogan."

"Just one drawback to it," McCallum remarked.

"What's that?" Crozier asked.

"No water to float it on."

The crew laughed again, leaped out along the ice crust and helped the Tibetans repack the mules.

When it came time to pay the old boatmen for their transport, Crozier talked the matter over with Fort Knox because, before leaving Lhasa, Crozier had been advised by Sherriff that the soldier generally knew the customary price for any service.

Crozier added a tip to the boatmen's fee for piloting them across the roiled, turbid water, and as the solid silver rupees hit the palm of one of the old men, he solemnly shook his head and looked at Crozier as

if to say that here was a rich man, a stupid man, and a crazy foreigner all wrapped up in one human skin. The expression on the old man's face showed that he was overpaid.

After they collected their money, the boatmen pulled the coracle out of the water and began carrying it along the shore to a point one mile upstream. From that point, they knew the current would land them at the right place on the far side. Although their hide boat had just brought a cargo of hundreds of pounds across the water, it was so light they could carry it easily.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THEY FOUND A DESOLATE LITTLE VILlage here on the south bank of the river, the usual collection of Tibetan huts. After they loaded their animals, they mounted and rode quickly through it and along the riverbank. The trail took them past a small monastery, the most attractive they had seen, and as they rounded a bend in the river, they glimpsed a large *chorten* on the south bank with a big, heavy chain about three hundred yards long running out to another *chorten* on an island near the north shore. The old links of iron were red with the patina of neglect, rust, and ruin.

"*Chaksam! Chaksam!*" Fort Knox repeated several times when he saw the long stretch of ancient chain over the water.

"What the hell's he saying?" Crozier asked McCallum with intense interest. "He's trying to tell us something. Do you know what?"

"Nope, Chief," McCallum replied. "Wish I knew, too. It's some more of the Tibetan lingo. I'm only a Hindustani scholar."

"Well, apparently his English is as bad as your Tibetan," Crozier scoffed good-naturedly. "This is going to be your last trip as my interpreter."

"Hope I can depend on that." McCallum laughed.[1]

At first, Crozier wondered why a *chorten* was built out in the stream and why the iron chain had been hung from the south bank to it. He first thought it

[1] *Chaksam* in Tibetan means "iron bridge."

might have been put there to hang prayer flags on, then he suddenly realized that the structure out on the island was no *chorten*, but the cracked stone pillar which had been part of a suspension bridge. The great length of chain and the broken rocks were all that remained.

"It's a bridge!" Crozier exclaimed. "Just like the kind you see in Western China. Or part of one. Fort Knox must be trying to tell us about it. Looks like a bridge that Tibetans started building and never finished."[2]

They now entered a country as dry and desolate as any they had found in their travels—rough, small gullies filled with sand, which the wild west wind blew in their faces. As the morning advanced, the wind gradually increased to express-train speed, enveloping them completely in the blowing sand. The grit stung their faces and filled their red, bloodshot eyes. They choked and coughed as they breathed in the dust and ground the sharp, rough grains with their teeth. Between the roaring fury of the wind and the sand that found its way into their ears, they could no longer hear each other talk. The poor mules plodded patiently on, lowering their heads and turning them away as much as possible from the blast. Sometimes, in the sand swirls of the most powerful

[2] Crozier was correct in his surmise that it was the remains of a suspension bridge, but he was incorrect in his assumption that it was never completed. It was finished, and after floods cut away the northern approach and widened the river's banks, the Tibetans never repaired it; instead, they went back to the time-honored ferry. A Tibetan writer recently said the bridge was built in the time of the last Dalai Lama. According to travelers who have written about it, this bridge stood eighty years ago more or less in the same condition Crozier saw it in 1943. Its age has been estimated up to five hundred years. William Rockhill, an American scholar on Tibet who seldom erred, said it likely was built by the Chinese in the eighteenth century, though tradition usually credits it to an old Tibetan king born in 1385.

gusts, the animals stopped still, waiting with their burdens for the infuriated wind-god to move on.

Although it was bitter cold, they saw no snow here, and for that matter, hardly anywhere in Tibet, except in the high passes. Since it was winter, Crozier expected a lot of snow, with the mountain passes blocked; but it never came, and he later discovered why—only about three to twenty inches of moisture a year fall in the area in which they traveled. Some snow—usually very little—fell on them in the passes, and they saw it on the high mountains, where it is eternal, blown by the savage wind in long plumes from the peaks.

Many poor, desolate little monasteries and one old stone fort clung to the rocks of the sandy gullies, small gorges, and little valleys through which they passed.

"How can these monks live here?" Crozier wondered aloud, above the wind.

"Oh, I suppose Buddha looks after them," one of the crew shouted back.

"The monks get fed for looking out after a man's interest in the next life," McCallum remarked during a lull.

"Apparently no one is looking out for the people's interest in this life," Crozier said during another calm moment, "least of all the people. In a way, life to them is a transition and unreal." He mused for a moment, then said: "Give me time, and I might pick up a little of the thinking in this country."

Ahead of them they began to see collections of bare, winter-denuded trees and peasants' mud houses. These trees, like all the others they had seen, were planted by man and lovingly cared for because, in this country, all above timberline, there was hardly

such a thing as a native grove of trees. Beyond the trees and houses, a formidable barrier of mountains loomed, with snow on the ridges. The first great pass they were to climb confronted their sure-footed beasts. It was welcomed because it meant an end to the sand of the river course.

Soon they entered a deep canyon, where the mountain ridge began to rise up, and after that they started an ascent which would lead them over a pass more than sixteen thousand feet high. It was cold in the canyon, gloomy and full of shadows, and they were glad when the trail began to incline upward, for now and then they rode into the warmth of the sun. As they mounted upward, heavy mists of clouds stung their faces like a wet whip. It felt somehow comforting after the lash of the sand. As they climbed, they saw many images of gods beside the trail.

After a while they began to look back with fondness at the purple depths of the canyon from which they had emerged. They wound around rocky masses on a narrow, boulder-strewn trail at the brink of seemingly bottomless chasms. The trail, hacked into almost vertical cliffs, hardly gave them room to sit straight on their mounts. As they climbed higher and higher, they left the clouds far below them, and once, when they stopped to rest the mules, Crozier rolled a large rock to the edge of the track and pushed it off. More than two thousand feet below him, the boulder dropped through clouds massed against the sheer cliff. Crozier didn't hear the rock hit anything after it left the ledge.

"Talk about rocks in the clouds!" Spencer remarked. "There's rocks far above the clouds in this country."

About two hours before noon, they came out on top

of Nyapso Pass, at least four thousand feet above the waters of the Tsangpo at their backs. The clouds parted briefly when they reached the top, and they looked down on the winding river in its long and rugged valley.

On the other side of the pass, in a country as barren of plant life as the moon, they glimpsed an arm of immense Yamdrok Lake, sometimes called the Scorpion Lake, Lake Palti, Turquoise Lake, Yamdo Croft, or the Lake of the Upland Pastures. The pastures must have been lower down and in a different season, for Crozier saw none at that height. The steel-gray waters of the deep lake curved like a vast, wide river for sixty miles among the uplands, with distant snow peaks flashing like jewels in a moment of sun. Rolling waves far below shimmered toward the icy shore in the brief light. White and gray hands of mist with cold fingers of fog clutched at slopes and valleys fourteen thousand feet high. They could see the trail winding along the stony shore, sinuous and serpentine in the lower distance, and up above it, a lonely flight of wild geese.

The top of the pass had many wind-torn prayer flags on it. In keeping with Tibetan custom, they gathered rocks and flung them on two huge cairns, many times head high. Travelers had made these immense piles, possibly over a period of centuries. Remembering the advice of how one should conduct himself in Rome, and applying it to the situation, they bowed in all directions to appease the mountain gods.

Fort Knox, Duncan, the cook, and the other Tibetan soldiers tied prayer rags to dust-laden bushes stuck in the piles of rock, already covered with these offerings by other travelers. During their prayers,

the Tibetans mingled a little barley flour with the dust of the ground, concluding their petition to the gods with the traditional shout, *"Lha gyalo! Lha gyalo!"*

"It would be nice if the people of this country would take all the rocks in their heads and add them to these piles on the passes," Crozier remarked.

"I see little chance of it, Chief," McCallum replied. "I imagine they'll go on piling rocks on the mountains, making them even higher than they are. They've got to pile up their luck in the Great Beyond, and piling up rocks here on earth is one of the ways to do it."

Crozier pointed to the southwest, down and across the long arm of Yamdrok, at the same time pulling the chart he had brought from Lhasa out of his *chupa*. He motioned McCallum to join him.

"You can't see this little lake down there," he said, fingering it on the map. "But it's there on the other side of the big one, or rather, between two arms of the big one. Sherriff or somebody told me the people around here throw their dead into it."[3]

"They don't cut them up and feed them to the buzzards?" McCallum questioned.

"Not the way I heard it," Crozier replied. "The people think gods who hold the keys of heaven dwell in its waters. They believe the dead, if they throw

[3] The map showing the routes of Sarat Chandra Das, Indian traveler and explorer, through Tibet in 1879 and 1882, has this little lake cradled in the arms of winding Yamdrok Lake. Its name is Dumo (Demons) Lake. The Kyi River section (437) of the World Aeronautical Chart, with information current as of October, 1949, published by the Air Force Chart Service, Washington, D. C., shows two small lakes of about the same size in this area. The northernmost one is connected to Yamdrok by a slender stream and is shown as a part of Yamdrok. Sarat Chandra Das also charts this part as an arm of big Yamdrok, at least half a mile wide.

them in the lake, stand a better chance of getting in on the ground floor in the after life."

They began their descent toward the lake, a downward journey of not more than 2,500 feet. All of them—with the exception of Parram, whose frostbitten feet were still slightly sore—dismounted and walked down from the pass, remembering that a man is not a man in Tibet unless he does. About two-thirds of the way down to the waters of the Yamdrok, it began to snow lightly, filling up little hollows on the trail. The wind rose and began to cut at their faces through their short growths of beard.

In the lee of a steep cliff which broke the wind, they stopped long enough to eat some of their cold mutton, now just about frozen. While they were trying to thaw out a few pieces of the meat in their mouths, a Tibetan came running around a steep bend in the trail, with bells dangling and tinkling on his person. Dirty and unkempt, like most of the others they had seen, he carried a long staff with a sharp point on the end and a huge yellow sack on his back, with a large pad of feathers between the sack and his shoulders. At first the airmen thought he might be attacking them, but their three Tibetan guards made no move toward him. As he drew alongside, he stuck out his tongue slightly past his lips—perhaps half an inch or less—and sucked in his breath with a noise audible above a lull in the wind. Losing no time, he again broke into a run up the steep trail to Nyapso Pass.

"Well, whoever he is, he's friendly," Parram said as best he could with a mouthful of half-frozen meat. "And polite too."[4]

[4] When they arrived in Gyantse, they found this man was a Tibetan mail carrier. The staff and bells were the emblems of his official duty.

After eating, they resumed their trek toward the shore of the lake. When they reached the long, narrow arm of Yamdrok, they found it from a mile to two miles wide, with the trail following the shoreline to the southwest, just as it appeared from the pass.

They passed through two or three villages before they came to Pedi, the settlement where they planned to spend the night. These villages were like some of the others they had seen, so small they were really not entitled to be called villages, some having only a house or two, others maybe a half dozen. Villages such as these were often deserted, or had only temporary inhabitants, such as yak herders or nomads who drifted north in summer and south in winter, grazing their flocks of yaks and goats. When they drew near Pedi, Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine rode on ahead to see that everything was ready to receive the airmen when they arrived.

Arrangements had been made for them to change mounts and pack animals at Pedi. Here, and at the end of every second day on the trip out, they were scheduled to obtain fresh animals—otherwise they would not be able to double-stage the journey. The mules would not be able to stand the pace. It was necessary to return the animals to their owners at the end of every second day, and they hired Tibetans at the villages in which they stopped to take the hired mules back. When they rode into Pedi, they found the soldiers arrogantly throwing the Lhasa government's weight around because accommodations were somehow not up to their expectations. The fresh mules for tomorrow's trip were not ready, and the soldiers had the villagers jumping to get the necessary animals by the next morning.

Crozier was too weary and sick to be concerned, as he had taken a cold and felt like he was coming down with a case of influenza. Huffman also was showing symptoms of a cold, and both were ready for any mud-hut accommodations fate would provide.

They were taken to the dusty, dirty courtyard of the chief of the village, men and animals filing inside the stone and adobe wall. They found loose stones stacked against the wall, some laid out for a walk, and—miracle of miracles—a pile of wood in a corner by the entrance gate.

Out beyond the entrance was a low hill on which a gray old ruin of a fort rested. A worn path led to the top of the ancient, broken ramparts, the base of the old walls crumbling into the rock rubble of the hill. Back of the fort, a bare, stony mountain rose, and the cold waters of the lake lapped around it on three ice-encrusted sides. Around the old heap of gray masonry were clustered the white stone and clay houses of the villagers, tattered prayer flags flying from their rough walls.

The chief and his family received them hospitably, something Crozier didn't expect when he found the Tibetan soldiers had been acting more or less like martinets. The hostess brought water, pots, firewood, and yak dung, a fish from the lake, eggs, and a jug of milk—not with servility, but willingly. The crew was glad to get everything but the milk and eggs. They had been in Tibet long enough by now to know that Tibetans prefer old eggs to new, and since the milk had a slight tinge of red to it, they rejected it, too.

"What do you suppose makes the damned stuff look pink?" Crozier wondered.

"Search me, Chief," McCallum replied. "Maybe it came from a purple yak."

"Well, I don't have to have the medics to tell me not to use it. Hope we don't offend the lady here by not drinking it. Maybe we can pour it out during the night when she's not looking, and she'll think we drank it and liked it."

They had eaten the last of their meat on the trail that day, so they needed to replenish their larder. Fort Knox led Crozier and McCallum to an old villager to buy meat, Duncan, the cook, following along as purchasing agent for the expedition. Fort Knox summoned the villager from one of the huts, who took them to a sheepfold. Duncan cut out a sheep from the herd, then stuck out his right hand, which the villager grasped. They released their grip, then immediately clasped hands again. No sooner had they dropped this handclasp than they joined palms again.

"What's going on?" Crozier asked wonderingly. "Are these guys long lost brothers?"

"Search me again, Chief," McCallum replied quickly. "How the hell should I know? I don't know what they're doing, but I don't believe they're shaking hands. The people in these mountains don't shake hands. Remember, Chief, we're in Tibet."

Crozier took a better look and saw that the two Tibetans were not actually clasping hands, but fingers instead. At one grip, they clasped a finger each, the next time two, then three, now four, again five, talking all the while.

"What in the name of all that's holy are they doing?" Crozier addressed no one in particular. "I've seen people shake hands all my life, but damned if

I ever saw them shake fingers. These boys must come from the same sect, if not the same monastery."

Fort Knox, looking on quietly, solved the mystery with one word.

"Bargain," said he. Then, for emphasis, he repeated it. "Bargain."

"Oh," said Crozier with a sudden smile of understanding. "Bargaining. I should have known."

Duncan and the owner of the sheep, after a few more finger shakes and something close to angry shouts, concluded their business transaction. The cook agreed on fifty silver rupees for the sheep. On hearing this, Fort Knox went into action with snarls of angry Tibetan, brandishing his rifle. When he stuck the barrel in the villager's face, the price quickly went down to thirty.

After Crozier and McCallum made Fort Knox understand that they wanted to pay the old man fifty rupees for the sheep, both the villager and Fort Knox were obviously pleased. The seller of the sheep wanted to bless the animal after he got his money. He placed his right hand conspicuously and obligingly on the sheep's shoulder, spun his prayer wheel reverently, and ceaselessly murmured a prayer of good fortune for a minute or two, then stuck out his tongue politely and sucked in his breath audibly, as he had been taught to do in front of his betters. Then, throwing the sheep on its back quickly, he firmly tied its woolly legs. Drawing a thin, narrow knife with a large handle from inside his *chupa*, he plunged it to the hilt in the heart of the timid, doomed creature, drawing it out bright red. The animal didn't move once, dying quickly, with no blood flowing from the deep knife wound. Crozier and McCallum were soon to see why the old shep-

herd killed the creature in such a way the blood did not flow outside its body.

The old man slit open the belly and took out the sheep's intestines, and Duncan brought up two pots and washed the entrails clean. With a large wooden spoon, he dipped the blood from the carcass; with another, he took barley flour from a sack he brought up; mixing the blood and *tsamba,* he filled the cleaned sheep's entrails with this bloody pudding and took it back to the kitchen of the village chief's house. The old villager then hung the sheep's carcass on the wall of his house and cut all the meat from the bones and turned it over to Duncan, who came back with pots to carry it. The cook left the sheep's head, hide, and skeleton with its former owner.

The old shepherd brought some dried mutton out of his house to sell them, telling Fort Knox it was two years old. Crozier found it perfectly cured and free from smell. Because of the dry, cold climate, he concluded that cured meat would remain eatable for years, so he bought an entire dried carcass for the trail.

As Crozier and McCallum walked wearily back to the chief's house, McCallum pointedly asked Crozier in socratic tones if he planned to eat any of the blood and flour mixture.

"Hell, no," he replied. "Not as long as Duncan cooks some of the meat."

"Chief, what about that blood and guts?" McCallum questioned incredulously. "It's something else to tell my grandchildren. Did you ever hear of putting food in a slaughtered animal's guts before?"

"Sure," Crozier replied. "Pork sausage in hog guts at hog-killing time. Down in the beer belt of Texas, they mix hog's blood with the sausage."

"The beer belt? What part of the state is that?"

"The German area. Down around where Admiral Nimitz comes from."

"Well," McCallum answered pertly, "I live and learn. Texas and Tibet seem to have something in common. It's a comfort to know the undertaker doesn't have anything to do with eating in Texas anyhow. Say," he raised his voice suddenly, "do you suppose that guy who killed the sheep is the village corpse-chopper?"

"Could be." Crozier grinned. "Makes you wish you were back in Texas, eh?" He paused. "At least, we don't get flies with the meat here, like you do in Calcutta. I haven't seen a fly since we've been in Tibet, or any other insect for that matter. People here, though they're dirty, don't seem to be picking lice off one another, like some of the low-caste classes we've seen on the other side of the Himalayas."

"Probably too cold for any louse's liking here," McCallum said.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed. "We don't have to worry about spoilage of the meat we buy. The problem is to keep it from freezing."

Back in the village chief's kitchen, the crew and the three Tibetan soldiers rested on the floor while Duncan boiled the blood and guts and the mutton. The airmen agreed they were going to let Fort Knox, Duncan, Rain, and Shine fight over the entrails, as evidently from their actions, they were looking forward to a culinary delicacy.

When Duncan had the meal ready, the fresh meat tasted good, washed down with bitter yak-butter tea. The minute Crozier drank the last scalding drop, he was off to bed on a Tibetan comforter spread

on the floor of the headman's house. The way he felt, he didn't care if the villagers were late with the fresh mules next morning.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NEXT MORNING, FORT KNOX WOKE Crozier and McCallum to tell them the village chief at Pedi still lacked one mule for their caravan. Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine left with the headman in tow to procure the needed beast of burden.[1] Crozier perhaps would have been impatient, but he still had a touch of influenza and didn't feel like being on the move.

He had hoped to start traveling each day by eight o'clock in the morning and to ride until at least five o'clock in the afternoon, but he couldn't hold to that schedule this day on account of the needed mule. Besides, the savage winds which usually rose during the day had a tendency to temper his desire to ride the full time. Crozier had planned, if possible, to ignore the time-honored caravaneer custom of resting in the afternoon and letting the mules graze, hoping in this way to get back to India as quickly as possible.

After a breakfast of their toasted barley flour, washed down with yak-butter tea, the crewmen began talking about prospects for the day's journey, since a high, cold wind, which had risen much earlier in the day than usual, blew scattered flakes of snow across the village chief's courtyard.

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[1] The supply of animals for the transport of travelers on government order or pass in Tibet is a form of taxation called *ulag*. Although the animal transport of the American aircrew was on government order, Crozier paid for use of the animals out of his box of five thousand silver rupees.

"This looks like a rough day for traveling," Huffman said. "My shoulder aches this morning."

"Ditto my feet," Parram said.

"My cut chin pains me like hell," Spencer said disparagingly, "especially when my tongue wags against it too much, or I have to work it too hard on some of this tough Tibetan mutton. They must plow with sheep here. Bet there's not a gentle lamb in the country."

McCallum came in from the courtyard and held his cold, chapped hands over their brazier of fire, which was just beginning to smoke up the room.

"Coldest weather we've had, but the snow's light," McCallum said. He turned to Crozier. "What's in store for us rubbernecking American tourists in Tibet today?"

"More of the same," Crozier replied dolefully. "For instance, looking at the north end of some south-bound mules unless you happen to be in the lead. More mountains. And—oh, yes. We're supposed to see a village today where the monastery's run by a woman—a high lady lama. Learned about it in Lhasa."

"Gosh, Skipper, tell us more," McCallum said insistently. "You've been holding out on us."

"Does she run a monastery full of women?" Spencer asked expectantly.

"Sorry to disappoint you, son," Crozier replied archly, "but her followers are all men. She's supposed to be the reincarnation of a goddess called the Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt. It's all very uncommon here in Tibet, they say. Major Sherriff told me in Lhasa the Tibetans usually believe that a woman, to reach the Buddhist heaven, must first be reincarnated as a man."

"The Buddhist idea of heaven is called nirvana," McCallum informed them. "It's a freedom from care, or freedom from wishing for anything—big or little. If a fellow doesn't want anything, he's not frustrated."

"Well, all I want is out of Tibet," Spencer spoke in tones of finality.

"Just stick with your mule, son," Crozier spoke up, "and you'll make it."

"Do you suppose we'll see this Thunderbolt Sow?" Huffman asked.

"Can't tell," Spencer said reflectively. "Better be kind to all pigs you meet."

"That's right," Crozier agreed. "The reason they call her the Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt, she can change herself into a hog and put up one hell of a fight. The story has it she once turned all her monks into pigs and routed a whole army. Remember that, men, and be polite. We're just one plane crew."

"What else did you hear about her in Lhasa?" McCallum asked casually.

"Well, the way I heard it," Crozier continued, "she has to sit up all night every night and meditate. What sleep she gets, she gets during the day sitting up on some cushions. Her bed's her chair, they say. McCallum, you know that little lake I showed you on the map while we were up on the pass?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, her monastery is close to it. Not too far from here. The Tibetans believe she keeps the lake from overflowing. If it weren't for her, everybody in Tibet would be drowned. I heard something about how she drowned a whole army—that is, one of her past reincarnations did. Another thing. Once during her life, she visits the remains of her former re-

incarnations to pay her respects—to herself, I suppose you'd say."

"How old is this sow?" Parram asked vaguely.

"Well, the way I heard it back in Lhasa," Crozier replied banteringly, "she's only about six or seven."

"Just a pig out of the suckling stage," Parram replied with mock disappointment.

"I've just lost interest," Huffman said with a smile.

"She's the only woman the Dalai Lama can touch in all of Tibet, from what I heard at the Dinkilinka," Crozier told them. "She's supposed to be the consort of the original god he represents."

"In that case, I'd say there's some drawback to being headman in this country," Spencer interposed. "What's the name of this place where she is?"

"Samding or Sanding—or something like that," Crozier replied. "That's the name of her monastery. The name has something to do with meditation. It's just a few miles up the trail."

"It'd be nice to take a little gal like that back to the States and educate her and get her out of all this superstition," Parram declared.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed. "I'd like to take her back to Texas and educate her." He paused and his eyes twinkled. "But I'd send her to the University of Arkansas."

"Arkansas!" McCallum exclaimed. "Why Arkansas? I can't imagine a Texan who would want to educate a kid anywhere but in Texas."

"The Arkansas football team is the Razorbacks," Crozier grinned. "She could be cheer leader."

The laughs were broken up by Fort Knox, who came to tell Crozier in broken English and by sign

that they now had enough mules to resume the journey.

While they had been talking about the Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt, the screaming, cold west wind had risen to a high pitch of fury, dropping the temperature below zero. As they filed out into the courtyard among the patient mules, it was nearly eleven o'clock. They already had lost almost half a riding day.

"Tibet will never be one of Frigidaire's greatest challenges," Spencer yelled at Huffman as he swung into the saddle. "Damn these mules anyway. I have a feeling all the time they're waiting to let me have it with a hoof."

Crozier dragged his cold, reluctant, flu-ridden bones out to his mule and mounted. The others seemed to feel better, even though the weather was colder. The old fort on the hill in front of the courtyard showed up gray and ghostly through the scattered snowflakes as they rode out on the trail. A rabbit hopped softly across the track in front of them, and they saw a bird that looked like a crane flying toward the water.

When they got down to the lakeshore, they found blue ice at the edge of the water which extended far out on the surface. They began crossing thick ice on an arm of the lake near its westernmost extremity and headed south, ignoring an embankment across the water farther west.

"*Sam, sam, sam,*" Fort Knox began repeating, while laughing and pointing toward the earth and rock embankment built across the lake's narrow arm.

"What the hell's he saying?" Crozier yelled at McCallum.

"I'm damned if I know," came the reply. "Your Tibetan is as good as mine."[2]

After they crossed on the ice, they came to a large rock by the trail where threadbare prayer rags were being torn to shreds in the wind. Despite the bone-chilling cold, in which Crozier did not want to move a muscle, one of the Tibetan soldiers dismounted and mixed *tsamba* and dust and scattered it at the base of the huge stone.

As soon as he remounted, the caravan moved on down the trail.

As they rode along, the snow ceased; but the wind, fresh from the deeply frozen recesses of vast uplands, tore at them like a demon. Crozier thought he heard something like a wolf howl above the storm.

They passed through a village where yak-hide coracles rested against the houses and were tempted to stop, but they plodded on, their teeth chattering and their bodies shaking. Gusts of wind now and then almost toppled them from their mounts. From time to time, sharp, hard sleet hit their faces like sand from a sandblaster; but there was never much of it at a time.

They walked and rode by turns, the same way they did on the journey from Tsetang to Lhasa, as they couldn't stay in the saddle too long at a time without danger of frostbite to their feet. By now, Parram was able to wear Tibetan boots on his feet and he could hobble about a little, but not very far. Certainly he couldn't make periodic hikes at the head of his mule, so he rode while the others walked. Parram's comrades took turns trudging on both sides

[2] The Tibetan soldier was repeating the Tibetan word for "bridge." It is odd that he would call an earthen embankment a bridge. Perhaps he was calling it a bridge in derision.

of his mule, rubbing and massaging his feet and legs to stimulate circulation.

The trail rose and fell with the shore of the lake, sometimes along the edge of the water, often along the top of a bluff, and sometimes far above, along the edge of a cliff. Everywhere the surface of the lake reflected the racing gray clouds blowing toward the east, except for that part of it which was iced over. It appeared blue.

They hadn't gone more than five miles before Parram began to complain of a feeling of frostbite in his feet, despite the rubbing and massage, and the others felt their noses and ears going dead on them. Crozier shook with misery in the cold. He decided they must seek shelter at the next village.

Shortly after noon, they rode into Nangkartse, a lakeside village on the border of a swampy, marshy area. Crozier, half numb in the bitter wind, thought it might be a salt marsh, as he had seen other evidences of salt on the lakeside part of the journey. When he had first seen Yamdrok, though, he had thought it looked like a freshwater lake.[3]

Fort Knox led them past a typical building, one they already had grown accustomed to finding in Tibetan towns—a high, rocky, mediaeval fort on a prominent rise of ground. After riding by the fort, they turned toward the dark hills above it, where the scudding clouds of the storm swept the stone-scattered terrain, fourteen thousand feet high. They passed by houses of Nangkartse's inhabitants perched on the hillside and turned into a courtyard, from where they looked down on the huge pile of

[3] Travelers in Tibet have reported Yamdrok Lake both as a salt and freshwater lake.

masonry that made up the fort and out onto the ice-covered expanse of the lake.

Although the shelter they found was the usual Tibetan village home, dark and smoke-smudged, filthy, and lacking in privacy, it was to them equal to the finest hotel in which they had ever stayed. They had heat—and inside they could only *hear* the wind. They were so happy to be out of the cold that it did not occur to any of them at first that the Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt had her queendom nearby. Their cook brewed a large cauldron of yak-butter tea to help thaw them out, and they resolved to wait out the storm.

Their hosts were kind. The women bustled about, bringing in mats and raising the dust with bundles of straw which served for brooms.

Duncan went into the smoke-defiled kitchen and rattled his pots and pans, then went out into the village to look for something new in the way of food. He soon returned with three treats—dried apricots, rice and fish.

After toasting themselves, back and front, before the smoking yak-dung fire Duncan had built in the kitchen, Crozier and McCallum walked outside beyond the courtyard to gaze over the lake, which was just below Nangkartse Fort, thick and high-walled. Although the wind was still roaring like an express train, the misty clouds had lifted some, and they saw the icy surface of another lake a few miles across the nearby arm of Yamdrok.

"That must be the lake we looked at on the map up there on the pass," McCallum said, stretching out his arm toward it.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed readily. "The Demons' Lake. The one they throw the dead in."

Between the two sheets of ice and water, at what appeared to be four or five miles away, they spotted a building on a little hill about two or three hundred feet above the distant lake. From their perspective, the building looked like some of the monasteries they had seen.

"That must be the Thunderbolt Sow's headquarters," McCallum said reflectively.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed in musing tone. "You're probably right. Let's hope she keeps any thunderbolts she has to herself. The wind's bad enough."

"I'm going to be suspicious of any pigs I see," the copilot said with amused weariness. "You know, the nice thing about back home is 'pigs is pigs' there, and pigs ain't people." He smiled wistfully at the thought.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed listlessly. He was weak physically, definitely felt worse, aching in every bone. He couldn't get over the bodily chill he suffered that morning on the way to Nangkartse. He began shivering again, as he had done astride his mule earlier.

As the gusty wind lulled momentarily, they suddenly heard the deep boom of monastic trumpets from over toward the distant monastery.

"That must be the thighbone reveille," McCallum remarked brightly. "Guess the monks are getting up to face this cold, cruel world. Every time I hear one of those things, it sounds like a fitting end for tall Texans."

"I feel too bad to make jokes," Crozier replied in weary accents.

They walked back toward the courtyard and the house discussing the prospects for better weather tomorrow.

"What we need is to hire one of these Tibetan weathermen," Crozier mused aloud.

"Weathermen? Do they have a lot of them?"

"Oh, yeah," Crozier replied definitely. "They burn a certain kind of seed—I forget what—and throw salt on the fire to keep rain way."

"Major Sherriff boned you up on these Tibetan weathermen, I suppose."

"Yeah. He told me some of the things they do during a drought, too."

"Yeah? Who are these weathermen anyway? Monks?"

"Who else?"

"Well, what's their remedy for drought? If it works, you ought to take it back to Texas and get rich."

"If I do," Crozier replied in pungent tones, "I'll use it to flood Massachusetts between Atlantic hurricanes."

"Okay, okay, you win." McCallum laughed. "How do these monk weathermen start precipitation?"

"Well, the way I got it, if things get pretty dry, the weatherman stands on the top of a mountain whose springs and streams have never been defiled by the presence of a woman or a dog."

"How do they know a woman or dog hasn't been around the springs?" McCallum asked quickly.

"That wasn't explained to me," Crozier answered promptly. "You know, there's always likely to be stuttering if you ask too many hard questions. When you get right down to the meat of the coconut, as the saying goes, I figure there are mountains and springs in this country that no men and yaks have messed up, let alone women and dogs."

"Do these weathermen do anything else?"

"Yeah. Sherriff told me he'd heard of their throwing yaks' or mules' blood into springs, and—oh, yeah—they stand naked in the winter cold and beat a drum."

"Well, they could never hit any hot licks on a drum in this country. If it's got to be cold to get the job done, today's a perfect day for drumbeating."

"The people themselves help out the weathermen," Crozier continued. "They don't just talk about the weather, like Americans do. They do something about it."

"Yeah? What?"

"Well, for one thing, women carry heavy sacred books across the fields and around the monasteries. The monks lead off the processions. Another thing, the monks string thread over crosses to snare the evil spirits that bring hail."

By this time, Crozier and McCallum were back at the sod and stone house in which they were lodging, and after they went in, they continued to talk.

"Chief," McCallum observed pertinently, "these people have more superstition in them than they do yak-butter tea. I was thinking of those weathermen and what you said several days ago about the way the monks practice medicine—if you want to call what they do practicing medicine." He paused. "You know, Skipper, you'd be sick and probably in the hospital if we were back in India. It's been in the back of my mind that you might get down and couldn't move. Or some of the rest of us, for that matter. If you should really get sick—get down and couldn't get up—what the hell would we do? Would you want to call in one of these birds—these monk doctors?"

"Well," Crozier reflected calmly, "not unless I had to." He paused reflectively. "But if things were bad enough—hell, yes," he concluded candidly.

"Would you swallow a pill with a prayer written in it?"

"I'll answer that by asking you a question," Crozier replied evasively. "Suppose you were in a bad way, and the monk physician prescribed that you buy a sheep selected for slaughter and then turn it loose?"

"Do you mean to tell me they do that? Where did you get that?"

"I heard it in Lhasa. I'm sure Sherriff told me."

"How in the world would that help a sick man?" McCallum burst out in wondering tones.

"Well," Crozier replied laconically, "the way they look at it, the sick man saves a life and maybe earns enough merit to save his own."

"Well, I'll be damned."

Crozier sat a few minutes, then got up.

"I'm going to knock it off," he told the copilot wearily. "I'll unroll my blankets here in the corner. I feel rotten. If I can take a nap, maybe I'll feel better. I wonder where the men are," he concluded, glancing around for Spencer, Parram, and Huffman, who apparently were not in the house.

"They're out hobbling around the village in the cold probably," McCallum replied. "Here," he said, taking Crozier's roll of blankets out of his hands, "let me do that, Chief. I know I feel more like doing it than you."

McCallum spread the blankets on the floor, and Crozier stretched out his tall, weary frame with a restful sigh.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ABOUT AN HOUR LATER, WITH SPENcer, Parram, and Huffman back, and Fort Knox and his two riflemen somewhere in the village, McCallum, who was in the smoke-filled kitchen with Duncan, heard Crozier call his name weakly from the next room. Rushing in, he found Crozier up on one elbow, pale and ashen, and beginning to vomit on the floor.

"I'm sick," Crozier muttered almost inaudibly as he heaved breathlessly and strained heavily to empty his stomach.

"Yeah," McCallum muttered to himself, "and a man was never sick in a more God-forsaken place." He paused and then declared with resolution, "I'm going to send to the monastery for the monk doctor—if there is one." He spun around. "Where in the hell is that Fort Knox?"

He called loudly for Spencer, Huffman, and Parram to come in and hold Crozier's head and otherwise help the sick pilot, then rushed into the kitchen for Duncan, remembering that the cook spoke some Hindustani.

"*Hakeem, hakeem*!" he repeated excitedly to Duncan, using the Hindustani word he had heard applied to physicians in India. He brought Duncan into the room where Crozier was, pointing to him and repeating, "*Hakeem, hakeem*!"

Duncan understood at once and started out of the house on the run, bumping into Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine out in the courtyard. Fort Knox ordered

Shine to saddle a mule at once, the soldier quickly obeying and riding toward the lake.

McCallum went out on the hill to watch, where he saw Shine going in the direction of the monastery, then ran back to Crozier, who was still retching.

"Men," Crozier muttered weakly to the crew around him, "I've tossed my cookies."

"Bad luck, bad luck," Fort Knox kept applying the only two English words he knew to fit the situation.

McCallum ordered blankets heated, for Crozier was chilled, his body shaking violently.

After a while, the vomiting stopped, and Crozier reclined on his back, weak and trembling from his ordeal. He lay still, cold and sick, under the thick layer of blankets.

It must have been three hours later, after night had fallen, when Shine rode into the courtyard on his mule, accompanied by a robed monk on a horse. When the two came into the room where Crozier lay, the old monk, who wore close-cropped hair, looked sturdy and tall at the side of the smaller soldier, moving with dignity in the faint, flickering light and somber, dancing shadows of the room's two butter lamps. The monk first talked to Fort Knox, looked at Crozier intently a long while, and then spun a prayer wheel he carried in his hand. Putting it down, he drew a silver box from inside his robe and took a pinch of brown powder from it and placed it in his own mouth.

"Hell, it looks to me as if he's giving himself medicine instead of the Chief," McCallum complained. "Guess I expected too much," he said to Spencer,

who was standing beside him. "But what else could I do in this situation?"

The old monk apparently called for hot water, as Duncan returned with a glass, to which the old man added a powder and had Crozier drink it. He then apparently ordered tea brought, as Duncan again left and returned with a cup of the buttered tea he had brewed and churned for the evening meal. The monk physician evidently ordered him to take it back and return with tea to which no butter had been added, as Duncan came back with plain, weak tea. Crozier drank a cupful and it stayed down.

The monk then brought out a bottle of reddish-yellow liquid and poured a little into a bowl, then sprinkled a few drops over the recumbent Crozier.

"He must be a Methodist type of Buddhist," Spencer whispered to McCallum. "Guess he knows what that sprinkling's for. I sure don't."

The old monk ordered some stones brought in and heated in the fire. When they were hot, he had them placed under the blankets at Crozier's feet and all around his body.

"That's really sensible," Huffman remarked with guarded admiration. "At least he knows something."

"Bad luck, bad luck," Fort Knox put in for perhaps the fiftieth time since Crozier fell ill.

The old monk doctor, after having the heated stones put under Crozier's blankets to his satisfaction, went into a lengthy conference in Tibetan with Fort Knox and Duncan, the cook. When they had concluded their talk, the soldier and the cook approached McCallum, groping for words. Fort Knox apparently knew one word of English and Duncan had one Hindustani word to fit the situation.

"*Matchhee,*" Duncan stated with emphasis.

"Fish," echoed Fort Knox.

"Well, apparently the old boy wants something done about fish," McCallum mused. "*Matchhee.* That's Hindustani for fish in the *Pocket Guide* the Air Force gave us. Something's got to be done about fish. But what?"

"Maybe he wants Lieutenant Crozier to eat fish," suggested Parram helpfully.

"Yeah, bet that's it," McCallum ejaculated quickly, motioning Fort Knox and Duncan to follow him into the kitchen, where he found the fish they had bought in Nangkartse already cleaned. Pointing to the cleaned fish, he turned to the Tibetan soldier and cook.

"Fish. *Matchhee,*" he repeated, looking into their faces for a glimmer of understanding.

But both Fort Knox and Duncan, wearing worried frowns, broke into faint, fleeting smiles and sadly shook their heads.

"Fish, fish." That was the only thing Fort Knox said, and he repeated the word again and again.

"*Matchhee. Jheel. Roopeeyaa paach,*" Duncan expanded his effort in Hindustani.

All at once McCallum thought perhaps he understood what Duncan meant, for he knew how to translate the words, and yet, he almost refused to believe it.[1]

It was clear to McCallum that Duncan wanted five silver rupees from him to buy more fish, but he wasn't sure for what purpose. McCallum remembered what Crozier had said during the afternoon about how a sick man may be asked to purchase an animal

[1] Literally, the cook said, "Fish. Lake. Five rupees."

doomed to slaughter for the purpose of saving its life, thus gaining enough merit that the gods will spare his.

"It sounds incredible," he muttered unbelievingly to himself, "but I actually believe they want us to buy some fish and throw them back in the lake. Next thing is to give him the money and see what happens. If we get to eat those fish, I'm wrong. Hell, I'll give him ten rupees," he thought to himself. Then he concluded in quiet, ironic tones, "Might as well make a double sacrifice."

The copilot went to the rupee strongbox, returned with ten of the big silver coins and gave them to Fort Knox. Fort Knox immediately placed them in the custody of Rain and Shine, who dashed out into the darkness of the courtyard and into the village beyond. Both Fort Knox and Duncan beamed smiles of approval upon McCallum.

The copilot and Fort Knox returned to the sickroom, and the Tibetan soldier spoke briefly to the old monk, who merely nodded after Fort Knox had stopped speaking.

The lama doctor had one more thing to do. He brought out some sugar-coated balls and gave one each to everyone present, including Crozier. McCallum broke his ball open, and as far as he could tell, these large pills were only *tsamba* dough with a covering of sugar. He addressed the crew.

"We don't want to offend this old boy. As far as I can see, these outsize pills are only barley flour dough with a covering of sugar. Prepare to swallow," he said with a faint smile. "Swallow."

He plopped the pill into his mouth, the others following him, all glancing at one another with guilty looks.

The dignified old monk, after murmuring a prayer and spinning his prayer wheel as a final act, prepared to leave. McCallum went to the rupee box and brought back fifty of the coins, which he dropped into the old man's hands slowly, five at a time. The monk couldn't hold them all at once and dropped several on the floor. The cook and the soldiers picked them up and helped him get them into his robe. The expression on the old man's face showed that this probably was the biggest fee he had ever received in his life. He returned to where Crozier lay, placed his hand on the pilot's head momentarily, then walked through the flickering light of the room to the door and was gone.

In about half an hour, Rain and Shine returned to the kitchen and reported to Fort Knox. It was no surprise to McCallum that they brought no fish.

"*Matchhee. Jheel,*" said Duncan to the copilot with a smile of accomplishment. "*Matchhee. Jheel.*"

Duncan began rattling his pots and pans in earnest and soon had food for the company. Since Crozier was resting without having any more stomach upset, he supped some rice gruel and took another cup of plain tea the cook brought him.

Thirty minutes later, after alternately turning their backs and fronts to the fire for a while, the crewmen tumbled onto their mats for a night's rest. It had been quite a day.

They awoke early the next morning to find the wind had decided to leave poor travelers in peace, or else had fled screaming on into the east. Perhaps the Tibetan god of the wind was tired. He had exerted himself enough to be so. Crozier, oddly

enough, was the first on his feet, with McCallum following.

"Look, Skipper," the copilot remonstrated with Crozier, "do you think you're well enough to go on? You were pretty sick last night, you know. I think you ought to take it easy. I'd rather take a long time getting out than have one of us not get out. Don't you think you're too sick to ride?"

"Well, I may be," Crozier replied, fingering his wan face beneath his stubble of beard. "But I'd rather die trying than lying—I mean, lying down."

"You're the Skipper," said McCallum, jerking on the last of his clothes and heading for the outside. "If you've got to go, I guess you've got to go."

He soon returned, rubbing his cold hands.

"How's the weather?" Crozier asked with more than casual interest.

"The wind's gone. Stars are shining," replied McCallum briefly. "Dawn'll soon be here."

"We need to get out on the trail," said Crozier emphatically. "We've lost time. We need to make some. If we keep on like we are, we'll be the most battered bunch of fly-boys in the Air Force when we get back."

By this time, everyone was up. They ate a little dried mutton and drank tea, paid their host, and moved out onto the trail in the early dawn.

As they rode along the shore of the lake, McCallum's mule was just ahead of Duncan's. Turning in the saddle, he called back to the cook.

"*Matchhee*," he sang out with lifted voice.

"*Matchhee. Jheel*," Duncan promptly called back.

That settled it in McCallum's mind. They had bought some fish caught by fishermen to be eaten and had returned them to the lake to gain merit and

recovery for a sick man. Whether they believed in the efficacy of the remedy or not, they nevertheless had bought it, almost without knowing it.

"In fact, nobody *does* know it right now except me," McCallum whispered to himself.

Crozier was overjoyed to find the sky clear and blue, for he knew it would be warm enough in the sun—perhaps too warm when they were bundled up and not riding in the shade of a mountain or overhanging rocks. The sun sparkled on the surface of the lake, the ice gleaming white and blue in the bright light.

They traveled only a mile or two by the marshes until they turned southwest again onto a wide, flat meadow. As they rode along, a poor little dog, only skin and bones, and shivering in the cold, came toward them.

"Damn me, I will think about him tonight," Spencer said, " if I don't at least toss him a bone."

"Yeah," muttered Crozier, who then shouted at McCallum. "Hey, McCallum, get Duncan to throw that miserable dog a chunk of meat."

McCallum managed to make the cook understand his Hindustani. Duncan looked displeased as he unpacked his rations and then stared at Crozier as if he were crazy when he tossed the frozen mutton to the shivering beast.

"My God," said Crozier, "it would take all the beef in Texas to feed all the big brutes I've seen in this country, let alone the little mongrels like this one."

Just a few more steps up the trail, they rode into the village of Ringla, where the ice-locked stream they were following turned with the trail toward the southwest. They gazed back along the plain to-

ward Nangkartse, which already had dropped from sight; but they could still see the Thunderbolt Sow's lamasery faintly catching the light of the morning sun in the distance. The trail ahead looked rougher than the comparatively easy track from Nangkartse to this miserable village.

They found only two or three poor families in the village, all apparently pottery makers, as they saw stacks of pots by the walls of the three hovels, the only buildings in Ringla.

Fort Knox pointed away to the southeast, up toward a pass, and repeated, "*Ta, ta.* Many horse, many horse."

"What do you suppose he's trying to tell us?" McCallum asked.

"I don't know," replied Crozier carelessly. "Probably trying to say there's good pastureland in that direction."[2]

The airmen, still sitting astride their mules, turned their heads to look back at the lake before pushing on across the high alpine meadow, which at this season had only a few tufts of dead grass scattered about it. They gazed at the icy surface of Yamdrok for a while, then turned their heads toward the almost perfect ice cone of Mount Nojin, the summit of which was just about ten miles to the west.

They rode on for five more miles, then turned west, riding into another little village called Langra, where they saw an old man sitting in the sun spinning his prayer wheel and moving his beads along a string. He stared with unseeing eyes straight at them, and his little dog remained quietly at his side, showing no canine displeasure at this foreign intrusion. Since the old man, dirty and oblivious of all

[2] *Ta* is the Tibetan word for "horse."

around him, would have been in reaching distance had they been dismounted, Crozier made careful mental notes of the ornate metal prayer wheel, beautifully inscribed with Tibetan characters. The wheel, more properly a cylinder, was mounted on a polished wooden staff, and from the brass cylinder dangled a brass chain, at the end of which was a wooden ball. The old man grasped the staff firmly in his left hand, and taking the ball in his right, pulled the chain, turning the wheel or barrel, repeating it endlessly. Apparently he feared that the constantly turning cylinder, full of repeatedly written prayers, would not store up enough merit for him with the gods, for the old man mumbled a barely audible prayer over and over again as he spun it.

The meadowland narrowed here at the village to a deep trench going toward the pass they were about to ascend, with Mount Nojin, nearly twenty-four thousand feet high, looming larger, whiter, and more everlasting on the close horizon. Just to the south of this great tower of ice, on the other side of the valley, another majestic peak, with blue glaciers just like those of Nojin, lifted itself toward the sky. The ice of the mountains seemed to bring light to the valley as much as the sun. Crozier felt that this village was the most forlorn spot he had ever been in, the one most void of human good-will, despite the godlike majesty of the mountains before him. A half-dozen or so evil-faced men, apparently capable of cutting any throats they happened to find next to their knives, skulked around the village's three or four huts.

The airmen and their Tibetan companions dismounted, broke the ice on the stream that paralleled the trail, and watered their mules before ascending

the pass ahead. Fort Knox, seeing that the inhabitants of the village had fodder for sale, urged Crozier to buy some for the mules. When McCallum went to the rupee box to get money to pay for it, Crozier saw the evil-eyed villagers watching him intently. After Fort Knox counted the silver rupees into the hands of one of them, another immediately mounted his horse and rode from the village toward the side of the narrow, gorgelike valley.

About a mile out of Langra, where the narrow trail already had begun to ascend out of the gorge, they rounded a shoulder of rock to find a huge boulder completely blocking the trail. Crozier at first thought the big rock had rolled down from the slope above, but he was soon to discard this notion. Several of the caravan dismounted to roll the boulder over the slope below, and when they did, a dozen men with rifles came riding cautiously down the slope above, picking their way onto the trail. The rifles, slung over their shoulders, had two long antelope horns fastened at the sides of each barrel.[3] Fort Knox, standing nearest the armed Tibetans and directly in front of Crozier, turned to the pilot and chattered in a low, excited voice, speaking Tibetan, and then he used a Chinese word, the first from that language Crozier had heard him utter. It was a word all Americans then in China knew, and Crozier all at once felt as if someone from home had spoken to him.

"*Boo-how, boo-how*!" Fort Knox repeated the Chinese word rapidly in guarded, nervous tones.[4] He

[3] These horns are used as prongs to rest the gun on the ground for steady aim, serving the same purpose as a tripod near the end of a barrel.

[4] "Bad, Bad!"

lapsed back into Tibetan momentarily, then found two words of English.

"*Miser, miser!* Bad men, bad men!" he repeated in tones of urgency.[5]

Crozier had guessed the situation when he heard Fort Knox repeat the Chinese word nervously.

By this time, Fort Knox had pulled his rifle around from where it was slung on his back and held it up at the ready. He shouted back to Rain and Shine, who quickly and smartly brought their rifles to the fore.

"Those men are bandits!" Crozier yelled back at McCallum. "Remember Tsetang! Unlimber Old Betsey!"

McCallum pulled his pistol to the ready position.

"Fire a shot in the air!" Crozier commanded sharply. "Show them we mean business."

The copilot pulled the trigger, the sound echoing quickly with a flat, hollow clap from the surrounding high rocks.

The Tibetan band, which had been advancing toward them, halted. Fort Knox, McCallum, Rain, and Shine leveled the barrels of their weapons at them.

The bandits and the airmen's caravan stood facing each other across the huge boulder for a time. One of the bandit horsemen, apparently the leader, reined his mount in front of the others. He had a big black streak smeared across his face, and when he twisted his lips in an ugly grimace, his teeth showed white and glistening. He spoke loudly in Tibetan, and Fort Knox spoke back, then turned to Crozier.

"Rupees. Food," he translated the robbers' demands.

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[5] *Miser* means "bandit" or "robber."

Crozier turned toward McCallum.

"Fire your pistol onto the trail beside them," he ordered. "We'll give them an answer they can make no mistake about."

The echo of the pistol's report again slapped from the rocks against their ears, the bullet whining into the side of the mountain after kicking up a small veil of rock dust just to the left of the bandit leader. To add to the impression, Fort Knox fired his rifle into the air.

"Ka-slap!" Again the echo seemed to bounce like a giant flat hand striking the towering peaks.

The robbers on horseback stood for a suspenseful minute, then the leader with the black-smeared face turned and said something, and they pulled reins and clambered back up the mountain toward the ridge.

Crozier emitted a strong sigh of relief, then felt his shoulders droop as he shed the suspense and tension of the past few minutes.

The airmen and their Tibetan guards moved shoulders against the rock in the middle of the trail, rolling it slowly over the side, where it made a tremendous crash, rolling and bouncing in the air until it came to rest against other rocks below.

"Whew! What next?" McCallum groaned in a loud voice.

"Let's hope the next bunch we meet aren't any tougher," grinned Spencer with relief. "We're lucky."

"We're lucky!" repeated Crozier with emphasis. "You can say that again."

"Our Tibetan troops stood fast, I'll say that," said Huffman with some show of admiration.

"Yeah," agreed Parram. "These guys pass mus-

ter as bodyguards in my book. Lieutenant Crozier," he addressed the pilot, "I'd say these boys rate a commendation."

"I'm willing, Parram," Crozier responded, "and if I could write Tibetan, they'd get it. Let's get out of here!"

As they mounted their mules and started to move up the trail, Crozier glimpsed the bandits riding over a ridge, dark silhouettes against the bright, high sky.

They hadn't gone more than a couple of miles up the trail, still traveling through the narrow, dark valley, when the melancholy booming of monastic trumpets reached their ears. The sound grew louder, and as they rounded a bend, they saw a group of men coming toward them a considerable distance away. As these men drew closer, they saw some had axes in their hands. They bore a trussed-up bundle on their shoulders, long, filmy-white scarves hanging across it almost to the ground. One long scarf was tied to the front of the bundle, and a monk walked ahead holding it. Ahead of him walked two other monks in red robes and wearing hats which Crozier thought looked something like those he had seen on American drum majors. The robes of these monks were very heavy, but their right arms were bare in the fierce cold of the shadowy canyon. The two monks were blowing trumpets of brass and wood, so long, heavy, and unwieldly that they had to have help to carry them. A small boy monk walked ahead of them holding up the ends of the long instruments with a special harness rigged over each shoulder.

"Those trumpets aren't thighbone jobs, like the ones you were telling me about," McCallum remarked to Crozier as the procession ahead drew nearer.

"No thighbone could be that long," replied the pilot.

The sad call of the trumpets filled the narrow valley, echoing from the cliffs and high mountain slopes all around. Just before the file of approaching Tibetans reached the aircrew's caravan, it turned off the trail, crossing the thick ice of the sinuous stream that flowed beside it. This crossing point seemed to be the most shadowed place in this darkened valley, a spot that contained no hint of the bright, sunny morning overhead. Crozier halted the caravan to watch the cortege enter a solitary, shaded little glen. Because of overhanging rocks, this cold, tomblike niche never felt the briefest ray of even the noonday sun.

When the monks reached a large stone slab, the laymen bearing the trussed-up bundle put their burden down and removed the wrapping. It was a corpse. As one of the monks drew aside, obviously to pray, the men who had borne the body placed it face down on the large flat rock, and the other monks drew marks across it. As they did so, a black vulture settled on an overhanging crag and another flew across the narrow patch of sky above the sunless gloom.

"Let's go," Crozier called out, and as the caravan moved on, the waiting corpse-cutters picked up their axes.

"I'm glad I didn't see the finish of that," McCallum called to Crozier.

"Yeah," Crozier agreed. "I might have given a repeat performance of last night. My stomach doesn't feel so good yet."

"No one was weeping," observed McCallum with a touch of awe.

"Yeah," replied Crozier. "They tell me relatives don't go to funerals here. Besides, if I understand the way these people look at things, I guess they figure you're lucky if you don't come back."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ABOUT FIVE MILES UP THE TRAIL from Langra, the deep, gloomy valley ended, and they began their ascent on a broad slope up toward Karo Pass, nearly seventeen thousand feet high, the incline running up between Mount Nojin and its neighboring peak to the south.

"*Oma tang! Oma tang!*" shouted Fort Knox as soon as they rode out onto this wide, rounded, more gentle grade rising up between the peaks.[1]

They plodded through a desolate, stony silence, broken only by the wind, which was rising again, bitter cold from the west. They could see the ridge where the trail crossed the pass between the two lofty peaks. Crozier judged it to be about two miles away.

They hardly had begun the climb on the trail's rocky, barren rubble before they found themselves traveling beside the snout of a glacier. In places, the ice had ground onto the trail through thorny shrubs, but mostly it only touched it here and there, sloping away gently up a gorge, getting thicker as it went. In one place, they detoured considerably off the trail to go around ice, which at first Crozier thought was part of the glacier. He later decided it was just another case of frozen water seepage.

The ascent seemed long on this lofty plateau, so just this side of the pass they stopped at an uninhabited house, a hut made of loose stones, where

[1] The words mean "milky plain" in Tibetan.

Duncan, the cook, prepared tea and thawed out a little mutton. Soon afterward, they were on top of the pass, which had the usual strings of prayer flags and two mountainous piles of stones. They raised the altitude of these cairns with their own rocky contributions.

"*Lha gyalo!*" shouted Fort Knox and his subordinates. "*Lha gyalo!*"

Crozier and the crew joined in.

"Somebody's apparently looking after us," said Crozier. "I'll give our God credit, but I can spare some for theirs, too."

After bows in all directions to the mountain gods, they stood a little while and looked back at sections of Yamdrok Lake, shining like jewels in the clear, cold air. They couldn't see much of the lake because of high points of land which cut their view. The little lake near the Thunderbolt Sow's lamasery nestled in the surrounding arms of high, surrounding peaks, one high headland cutting off the sight of part of it.

They dismounted to descend Karo Pass, all except Parram with his injured feet, and began walking down westerly to an even wider valley running north and south along the western environs of Mount Nojin and its great snowy neighbor to the south.

As they trudged wearily down from the pass, they saw a glacier about a quarter of a mile off the trail and up the side of the mountain in a ravine which was really two glaciers in one. The glacier had split around a high point of rocky land and was moving faster on one side than the other. Crozier decided this was because of the difference in the gradient of the two slopes.

They ran into sheets, clusters, and rivulets of ice on the trail in this area, caused by the freezing of

many springs, small and large. Many of these frozen springs joined forces with other larger ones coming down major gullies off the mountain. They formed streams several feet deep to many feet wide, some of them extremely wide. In summer, no doubt, these streams had steep banks and fast-flowing water. Now, in the extreme cold, they were frozen over with layer after layer of thick ice. The ice crust on these streams had become thicker and thicker until now it was crowding out the flow of water below. The extreme pressure under the surface had broken the ice in places and the water was beginning to flow over it. This water was freezing and further slowing down the bottom water flow, eventually leaving a nearly solid mass, with air holes here and there.

Fields of ice. More water coming to the top. More ice. More water. Another crust of ice on the new flow. In places there were towers of ice where there had once been streams. Crozier realized this alternate flow and freeze, freeze and flow, would continue all winter. Ice monuments and lakes of glacial size would result.

There were places where the streams were not frozen over—the water was too fast. The great ice flows seemed to form most where the steep streams leveled out, or the gradient was reduced, and they looked for all the world like glaciers to Crozier. He at first thought they were because they were often many times as long as they were wide. He realized that it was the most natural thing in the world that he at first had mistaken the giant ice flows for glaciers, since they produced the same effect. They did not actually move. They grew.

The caravan had plenty of trouble getting over and around the ice flows in spots. Crossing some of

them was extremely dangerous because a mule or man could break through, which they did in some places. They were lucky never to go into deep water, the next layer of ice catching and holding them. At all points, whether level or descending, they walked and led their mules, with the exception of Parram, the better to distribute the weight on the top layers of ice, which might be thin. At some places, however, it was necessary for them to ride across the ice fields because of open water on top of the ice. At one spot, they hacked a passageway through built-up ice.

At a point less than a third of the way to the bottom of the pass, they were able to see a long distance to the south. Stretching away slightly to the southwest was a long, high snow-covered ridge joined to the peak just south of Karo Pass. The ridge seemed limitless, running as far as the eye could see. It seemed to rise up far away and melt into the bright sunshine and blue sky. As they went around the shoulder of the sloping plateau on the stony, icy trail, they saw the last of Nojin's beautiful white cone from a close-up view.

It was about midafternoon when they got to the western foot of the pass. The last part of the descent had been through another gloomy canyon which hid the sun and caused them to bundle up. Finally, they emerged into a broad valley, somehow the most forbidding of all the valleys they had seen in this forbidden land. It was a wide, lofty landscape, bleak, gray, and barren, which seemed never to have felt the warmth of human footsteps—only the gaze of unfriendly gods. Here was a land impersonal if not hostile, one in which a man, if he must travel it, need now and then look back over the shoulder of his soul for dreaded unseen beings that might be stalking

him. Indeed, Crozier thought, it was suitable ground for primitive gods, or at least soil in which civilized gods might be perverted by them. The rock-strewn nearby ground, gripped in the clutch of an icy cold that seemed eternal, stretched up and away to the pathless frowning peaks that surrounded them on every hand. These stark, bare, encircling mountains, steepled and savage, lifted their hoary white heads to the sky in the limitless distance.

They turned south. It was only twelve or fifteen miles to the village of Ralung, where they would spend the night; but that distance is a long distance in Tibet. The sun was almost down when they dropped reins in the village.

They found Ralung about like all the other villages through which they passed, with a monastery to the southeast of it. The people were dirty, but polite and courteous to them. Despite the sunshine and clear, clean air, all the airmen now had colds, and they were glad to get out of their saddles. The house they were to stay in was like all the others they had seen—a combination of rock and mud, with a courtyard for the mules. A little stream nearby was frozen solid, except for a little pressure flow here and there. The highest snow peaks and ridges, about five or six miles to the east, stood like cold, lordly sentinels over them and the valley.

The white hood of the mountain to the east and the high snow cone of Mount Nojin to the northeast took on an ever-deepening glow of red from the sinking sun. When the blazing orb went down in the western end of the valley, which spread out in all directions, the high mountains seemed clothed in fire instead of snow. Crozier turned away from watching to unsaddle his mule and was busy about two minutes.

Lifting his eyes again to view the peaks they had crossed, he was surprised to find they were no longer there. Darkness had surrounded them quickly, brief minutes after the sun was gone.

Crozier had been told that Ralung was a town of many monasteries and nunneries, with the faiths of the occupants permitting them to marry. The airmen did not even think of these devotees of Lamaism, however, since they had no time to look around the village because of the growing darkness. Colds, fatigue, and sub-zero air kept them indoors. After eating some of their fresh meat and drinking their fill of yak-butter tea, they quickly fell on their mats and went to sleep.

Next morning, after Crozier had risen and walked outside the courtyard, he saw a woman near a herd of sheep sweeping the thick rime of hoarfrost from a large area of dead grass. He could not imagine why. Going back into the courtyard, he called the others outside and told them that he expected the caravan to be in Gyantse before the end of the following day.

"It's the third biggest town in Tibet," he said. "The British are there, and maybe we'll find more of the comforts of home. I hope so because I'm still feeling tough. Hope the sunshine we had yesterday lasts," he continued, as he glanced up the valley toward the deep red flush of dawn.

"How far is it to Gyantse?" McCallum asked, clapping his hands together in the early cold to keep warm.

"Oh, around forty miles," Crozier replied. "About that. Highway markers are scarce."

"Why don't we try to make it today?"

"Nope," Crozier disagreed. "I want to get into Gyantse with daylight to spare. There's a village named Shuto about fifteen or twenty miles from here. We'll get up early in the morning there and get into Gyantse early in the afternoon, I hope."

"What day of the month will that be?" McCallum asked.

"December the twenty-fourth, the way I've been marking it off," Crozier replied. "Christmas Eve."

"Fat Christmas we'll probably have," McCallum complained. "But so what! We're all alive and on the way back. That's Christmas enough."

After eating breakfast and drinking their morning tea, they saddled the mules and rode toward Shuto with their backs toward the rising sun. As they made their way across a wooden bridge over a frozen stream, Crozier thought it must be the Nyang River, which flows through Gyantse; but it was too cold for him to fumble for his maps.

The wide valley seemed more lifeless and forbidding than ever. The country was rocky, dusty, as cold as the sky-high mountains they were leaving at their back, and barren of any plant, great or small. Now and then they saw houses and little monasteries up wild, rocky glens. Whenever they approached a long, low *mani* wall or *mendong* beside the trail, they knew a monastery was not far away. These long, broad dikes or breastworks of stone extended up and down the terrain, sometimes stretching away for a thousand yards or so along the barren earth, with *chortens* at each end, the trail dividing around them on both sides. Some of them were only twenty-five or thirty feet long, the usual height was about five, and the breadth ten. In places, they looked as if they rested on cemented bases. The individual rocks

placed on the walls were painted with Lamaism's deities and carved with the characters which form, without a doubt, the world's most oft-repeated prayer, *"Om mani padme hum."*[2]

The pious Tibetan cook and soldiers were always anxious to keep the sacred *mani* walls on their right as they passed. Even the mules always wanted to pass the walls on the left when given free rein, evidence, Crozier thought, that a lot of true believers had ridden them before.

"It's fantastic to find a rock wall out here in this wilderness which encloses nothing," McCallum said, as they rode by one.[3]

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[2] This *mantra*, spell or prayer has been translated variously into English: "O thou Jewel in the Lotus. Amen." "O precious Lotus. Amen." "Hail, the Lord is in the Lotus." "Hail, thou Possessor of the Jewel Lotus. Amen." "O God, Jewel in the Lotus, receive me." "Hail to man's overself." "Oh, jewel seated on a lotus flower." "The Buddha's doctrine is in the world." "Deliverance is in the mind." "Hail to the Buddha in our hearts." "I invoke the path and experience of universality so that the jeweline luminosity of my immortal mind be unfolded within the depths of the lotus-center of awakened consciousness and I be wafted by the ecstasy of breaking through all bonds and horizons." The interpretations of these six syllables are countless. They form the *mantra* of a god, more properly a *bodhisattva* or saint who has attained buddahood or perfect enlightenment and the end of existence by his perfect merit, but who has been born again of his own desire to strive as a savior of man. That god was originally known in the Sanskrit form as Avalokitesvara, but the Tibetans know him as Chenrezi, and to them he lives as surely as the Dalai Lama, in whom Chenrezi manifests himself. Hence, the term "living god" or "living Buddha" applied to the Dalai Lama. The meaning of *Om mani padme hum* is as different as the individual minds of Tibet's millions, for an old Tibetan proverb says, "Every village has its own dialect, every lama his own doctrine." Some mechanically repeat it because they believe it secures for them a rebirth of bliss, or better, no rebirth at all. Others interpret it with symbolism or mysticism. No one can realize the infinite conceptions in *Om mani padme hum* until he understands that these are the first stammering syllables millions of children learn, that they form the last sighs of millions of dying men and women.

[3] The *mendong* or *mani* wall, or *mani* stone, in the minds of Tibetan believers, prays for those who pass by, just as do the fluttering prayer flags and spinning prayer wheels. The stones and walls also repeat the prayers of believers who have said the sacred words *Om mani padme hum* orally at those spots. Tibetans place inscribed rocks on the walls asking for safety on a journey, a good harvest, peace, prosperity for a new-born son, or they do this as a pious act.

They continued on through the treeless, grassless, lifeless landscape, and by midafternoon were at Shuto, at the mouth of a narrow canyon coming down from the north into the wide valley leading to Gyantse, where they crossed the ice on the river they had followed all the way from Ralung.

They ate some more of their fresh meat at the village, hoping it would lend them strength, as Crozier had developed a fever with his influenza and could hardly sit astride his mule. Huffman's cold had also turned into flu and he felt feverish and miserable. Spencer's chin, cut by the parachute harness when he jumped, was almost healed, Huffman's broken shoulder was hurting him less, and Parram's frostbitten feet were much better. McCallum's cold was about the same.

The entire five were dirty, miserable, unkempt men with growing beards and long hair. Their lips had cracked in the cold, dry atmosphere, and adding to this discomfort were large cold sores. A white rime formed around their eyes, and the moisture of their breath, freezing around their mouths, had added to the soreness and tenderness of their lips.

Since Crozier felt so unsteady on his feet, he decided to go to bed early. The others followed him, Spencer first going outside to urinate. Finding a secluded corner, he was performing his act when a toothless old woman carrying a child attempted to talk to him. Spencer realized the old woman probably thought no more of looking at him in this situation than she would have at his mule, so he finished and hurried through the courtyard and up the ladder to their quarters on the second floor of the house.

When he joined the others, he told them about the old woman.

"If we stay in this country long enough to form bad habits," Spencer said, "we may get arrested when we get back home."

"Why not look for the second-story slit over the ground-floor manure?" Huffman suggested.

Crozier, in his dark corner, smiled under his blanket despite the aches and pains of his tight, sore chest.

Spencer threw a yak chip or two on the burning bowl of fire from a stack along the wall provided by their kind, though somewhat dirty, host. He warmed his hands over the smoldering, smoking dung for a while and joined his recumbent comrades on the floor.

Crozier watched eerie shadows on the wall caused by brief, momentary flames in the dung-filled brazier. One of the shadows, in the transient moment it flickered unsteadily, loomed like a big *chorten* he had seen on the road from Lhasa, he thought. The pilot remembered how, when a boy, he had formed everything from a duck's head to the Devil's horn-crowned face with his hands in front of a blazing fireplace. Slipping away into a troubled dreamland, he found himself facing a Tibetan devil who flung him from a fire to the desolate, icy wilderness of a mountain peak. He was helpless to do anything but plod on through the cold wind forever, around and around the snowy summit, never ceasing, with no way to get down.

Tomorrow—Christmas Eve—the fates, the mountain gods, or whoever held the five crewmen's destiny, were to deal them an unkind hand. The mule-bound airmen would look upon it as tragedy, but only for a while.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

NEXT MORNING, DESPITE THE FACT that they all felt miserable and sick, they were up a little after sunrise.

"We'll spend Christmas Day in Gyantse," Crozier announced, "and if we're not feeling better, we'll stay longer. Hope we can find a doctor there. The British and Indians are supposed to have somebody in Doc Bo's class, or maybe better."

"Yeah, Skipper," McCallum agreed, "I sure hope we can find a doctor, too. If I were back in Jorhat, I'd be on sick call."

"So would I," Crozier responded. "But I guess we're gold bricks compared to Huffman and Parram."

"Don't forget my chin," Spencer reminded them. "I didn't nick that in a bathroom."

Crozier managed a grin which cracked the cold sores on his lips. Blood flowed down in a small trickle onto his chin.

"Damn it all," he muttered in irritated tones, "a man can't even laugh at his own troubles in Tibet without paying in blood for the privilege."

Their caravan headed southwest, then west, then northwest toward Gyantse, following the wide river valley in which they were riding. The valley was broad, but cut by gulches and canyons. Cliffs of rock and dirt often towered above them, and the trail almost disappeared at times in the stony wilderness. More and more often they passed fields, which would be planted in wheat or barley in proper season. Now,

in winter, they were only stubble or bare, with occasional piles of straw, marking the spots where Tibetan farmers had winnowed the grain.

They passed more little monasteries and *mani* walls with prayer flags and prayer wheels. When they stopped for lunch, Crozier idly whirled a prayer wheel mounted on a long *mani* wall.

"They say we got a machine age in the States," he mused. "Well, we sure haven't refined the system. They do their praying with machinery here."

After eating lunch, they mounted and plodded on through a cold wind which had risen since midmorning.

"How far have we come?" McCallum asked.

"Probably two thirds of today's trip," Crozier responded. "The valley widens out here. Gyantse isn't far away, I'm thankful to say. We've made good time."

Not many minutes afterward, Crozier, while riding behind the three Tibetan soldiers—who were in the lead—heard a yell and a wild commotion in the rear. Turning swiftly in the saddle, he saw one of the mules pitching about riderless, and a second glance told him Huffman, the crewman with the broken shoulder, had been thrown. But he didn't see Huffman on the ground anywhere. His heart pounded with excitement and dread as he turned his mule around. Spencer already was off his mount and McCallum was dismounting. Fort Knox, Rain, Shine, Duncan, and Parram—the crewman with sore feet—got off their mules.

The trail was rocky but wide at this point, with a canyon wall overhead and stone-scattered terrain below which sloped down to the frozen river at the bottom. The bed of the watercourse was not too far

down, but a long way for a fall from the saddle. Spencer was peering over the edge of the trail.

"What happened?" Crozier yelled excitedly as he dismounted. "Is Huffman hurt?"

"Huffman's mule shied at something and threw him off—" McCallum yelled back hoarsely.

"Where *is* Huffman?" Crozier interrupted testily.

"Down there somewhere," Spencer responded with concern, glancing around and then starting down the rocks.

Crozier was right behind him, the others following, dislodging stones which rolled and slipped on the fairly steep slope.

About halfway down to the stream they found Huffman unconscious, his broken shoulder wedged between two large boulders, and bruises and blood on his face.

As they attempted to move one of the big rocks, Huffman groaned and opened his eyes.

"What happened?" he asked in a puzzled, uncomprehending way.

"You got thrown off your mule," Crozier answered soothingly, out of breath. "Are you hurt bad?"

Huffman didn't reply, but merely closed his eyes.

They couldn't move either of the huge rocks, and when they attempted to pull Huffman's shoulder out of its wedged position between them, he cried out involuntarily with pain.

"He may have broken his shoulder all over again," Crozier mumbled with a tone of helplessness as they redoubled their efforts to shift one of the big stones. Failing in effort after effort to dislodge the big rocks, they finally had to pull Huffman out of his wedged-in position, despite his faltering, painful cries. Huff-

man's face was white from his ordeal before they got him out.

They wanted to fashion a stretcher from poles and boughs, but not a twig was to be had in the rocky recess in which they found themselves, and likely none in the entire stony region.

After binding Huffman's arms to his sides with rope to keep the shoulder from moving as much as possible, they scrambled up the boulder-strewn slope with him, handling him as gently as they could under the circumstances. Back on the muletrack, they let him rest on the ground. After he had lain still several minutes, Crozier questioned him.

"What happened, Huffman?" Crozier asked pointedly, his voice still tense. "Did your mule shy?"

Huffman glanced up wearily at Crozier squatting beside him.

"I don't know, Lieutenant," he replied falteringly, his voice strained and his face still ashen. "I think maybe one of his hind feet slipped off the trail. I don't know. I believe he was just trying to stay on the trail. I don't believe he shied at anything. I tried to pull his head around toward the inside of the path. Maybe that was the wrong thing to do."

"Maybe," said Crozier, showing signs of relief in his voice that Huffman was talking at length. "I haven't ridden much since I was a kid. Even if I am from Texas, I'm not too much of a horseman, and I'd never qualify as a mule skinner. All I know is mules are ornery."

"I doubt if he shied," Parram spoke up in calculated tones. "What the hell was there to shy at?"

Time passed, and as the natural color flowed back into Huffman's face, they talked over what they could do in the emergency. They ended the discus-

sion by deciding there was not much they could do other than get Huffman back on a mule, provided he could sit astride the beast.

"If he can't sit in the saddle," Spencer said firmly, "one of us can hold him."

"I'll ride his mule," Crozier said, "and he can take mine. I don't want to take a chance on that bastard again. My weight, if I haven't lost too many pounds, ought to hold him down."

They lifted Huffman into the saddle, put one of the Tibetan soldiers behind him to help hold him steady, and got under way again.

"He's lucky he didn't fall all the way to the bottom of that slope," Crozier remarked up the trail. "He could have been killed. Boy, it's a hell of a way to spend Christmas Eve."

"Maybe there'll be something to celebrate Christmas Day about in Gyantse," McCallum responded with anticipation. "At least we can be thankful for a bed if nothing else."

"Thank God for that," Crozier observed emphatically.

"Don't forget Buddha," McCallum rejoined.

They had ridden only a few yards up the trail with the freshly-injured Huffman when they saw at least a dozen horsemen coming toward them from Gyantse. As these riders approached, Crozier saw they were leading about half a dozen other horses—all of them saddled but riderless. They were soon face-to-face with a British captain and lieutenant and ten Indian enlisted men. The captain spoke first, after he reined in his mount.

"We observed the old Tibetan custom of riding

out to meet you," the captain said after introducing himself. "Which of you is the leader?"[1]

"I am," Crozier replied, pulling his mule up by the captain's rather frisky animal.

"Welcome to Gyantse," continued the captain, "all of you."

All the horses, Indian Army animals, seemed spirited, pawing and stamping about. The sunlight gleamed on the finely polished English saddles.

"We have fresh horses for you," the captain said efficiently, after introducing his lieutenant. He pointed to the riderless mounts and empty saddles. "We're taking you in to the British Trade Agency in Gyantse."

"How far is it?" Crozier asked.

"Only a few miles," replied the captain. "We'll soon be there, Lieutenant. You chaps ride the horses we brought for you. Your servant and bodyguard can follow along with your gear and your mules."

"We have an injured man," Crozier responded with concern. "He already had a broken shoulder—and now I think he's broken it again. He got thrown from his mule back down the trail just a little while ago. Maybe it would be safer if he rode a mule."

"That's rotten luck," the captain said without excitement. "Where is your man?"

Crozier pointed toward Huffman.

The captain dismounted, walked toward Huffman, motioning two of the Indian soldiers to follow suit. They went over, helped Huffman off the mule, and the captain examined the shoulder, Huffman winc-

[1] Because of illness and excitement, Crozier thinks perhaps McCallum and he did not record the names of the British officers at Gyantse. At the time this was written, McCallum could not be reached for records which may still be in his possession. Crozier does not remember the officers' names after more than fifteen years.

ing with pain as the British officer touched it. The captain walked back to Crozier.

"He'll be just as well off on a horse," the captain said decisively, "and we can get him into Gyantse quicker. One of my men can ride with him."

The Indian soldiers got Huffman astride a horse, one of them mounting behind him to help hold him in the saddle, if necessary, and to take the bridle. The other Americans changed to the horses and drew up stiff reins to hold the energetic prancing animals in check. They rode on up the trail.

Fort Knox, Rain, Shine, and Duncan followed with the slower mules, but they were never many minutes behind.

As they rode along, they began to see willow and poplar trees growing on the banks of the river they were following, terraced stubble fields extending out from it to greater distances than ever.

The British captain and Crozier were riding at the head of the caravan when they crossed the river again at a large village.

"Isn't this the Nyang River?" Crozier asked. "I've meant all day to look at the map Major Sherriff gave me in Lhasa, but the cold and the accident—"

"Right," interrupted the captain quickly before Crozier had finished talking. "Nyang. It means, in Tibetan, 'The Water of Taste,' 'Water of Delicacy,' or 'Delicious Water.'"

"Thanks, Captain," Crozier acknowledged.

After crossing the river, the caravan entered even more fertile country. The trail was sometimes still narrow, even though the valley had spread out. More often it was wider, sometimes extending to fifteen or twenty feet. In places, where it ran between the grain fields, it was no more than a ditch, however.

The valley became like an open plain between the mountains, the cultivated land increasing for miles on both sides of the river, rock dikes or fences sometimes separating the fields.

Rabbits now and then leaped out across the fertile ground, flights of wild ducks wheeled above the frozen stream, and a tufted bird that looked like a kingfisher dived toward the icy surface of the river. It seemed to be a good day for man and beast to be on the move, as, despite the cold wind, there was little if any dust, and the hot sun made Crozier warm inside his *chupa.*

The crewmen rode past the first cemetery they had seen in Tibet, an old one a little above the road. Judging from the hundreds of stone markers and tombs and the shape of the mounds, Crozier recognized it as a Chinese burial ground. He instinctively looked for an unburied coffin, like he had seen many times in the old graveyards of Yunnan Province; but he did not see one.

Several miles out of Gyantse, a dark ridge loomed up from the valley floor, indistinct in the blue distance. Gradually the magnificent lines of a feudal fort took shape on it, and farther away, the towering slope held many white buildings on its sides.

"The buildings you see are those of the monastery," the English captain told Crozier. "It's close to a thousand years old, I'm told."

"I suppose," replied Crozier, extending his hand toward the thick-walled castle, "the fort is even older."

"No, as a matter of fact, it isn't," replied the British officer. "Hope you're not disappointed, old man, if it isn't considered a ruin. Actually, it was built in this century, sometime after 1904." He paused.

"Perhaps it would be better to say it was rebuilt," he continued. "A British expedition destroyed the old one here in 1904, also the one at Phari, a town which you still have to pass through. By a treaty between Britain and Tibet, these forts were not to be erected again. The Tibetans soon violated that provision, and Government did not press the matter. The old fort that was destroyed was supposed to be about six hundred years old."

As they neared Gyantse, they crossed the river again, this time on a wooden bridge totally unlike anything Crozier had ever seen before. The piles or timbers holding the bridge up rested, not in the bottom of the stream, but on the thick ice covering the river's surface. Crozier assumed it to be a temporary crossing, that the permanent structure had been lost in a flood.

As they approached the city, Crozier could see the town was clustered around two hills, one to the east, the other to the west, both connected by a dip in the ridge that reminded Crozier of Saddle Mountain in Monterrey, Mexico. The hill to the west extended down onto a lower ridge which ran along northward to nearby mountains going up to eighteen thousand feet. The whitewashed walls of the monastery buildings clung to the sides of one of the hills, and on the other, six hundred feet above the valley, the immense, massive fort with its narrow, slitlike windows, spread itself out all over the hill, in places hanging over precipices and extending a quarter of the way down the scarred, slippery, rock-bare slopes. A thick masonry wall along the crest of the ridge reminded Crozier of pictures he had seen of the Great Wall of China. Around the lamasery and castle-fort,

on three sides of the double hill, were hundreds of white, flat-roofed houses.

It was late in the afternoon when they rode into Gyantse, Tibet's third largest city, for decades the terminus of the British and Indian trade route into Tibet. The caravan entered the town, passing alongside a *mendong*, on both sides of which were houses. Down this narrow lane, the riders reached a gate in the rough, massive wall now towering above them. Crozier judged the thick wall, from what he had seen of it, to be two or three miles around.

Inside the gate, they were soon on the main street, where they rode past the tallest *chorten* they had seen in Tibet, the glistening cone of which seemed a hundred feet above the ground. Crozier concluded that it was considerably higher than the ones he had seen at the western gate of Lhasa. It was at least a hundred and fifty feet square at the base, extending upward for nine or ten stories in ever narrowing tiers, the tower culminating in a cupola and gilded dome. At various levels it had balconies around it, onto which led openings from the inside of this huge shrine.

They had been depending on Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine to guide them to the English in Gyantse. Now that the British had ridden out to meet them, the captain was leading the caravan. Crozier had understood they were to stay in the first of a number of dak bungalows between Gyantse and Darjeeling, but the British captain already had informed them they would stay at the British Trade Agency. The thought of better quarters in the offing overwhelmed Crozier.

"Now we won't have to look for that upstairs hole

leading to that downstairs manure pile," he said to McCallum as they rode through the streets.

"Maybe not," McCallum replied. "I hope so. But between subfreezing temperatures and ill-fed dogs in this country, I don't think the sanitary aspects of the hole are too bad."

People seemed to be everywhere in the town, swarming in the streets like flies in the outdoor meat markets Crozier remembered in Calcutta. They were crowding up and down the inclines and through the narrow streets. The caravan passed wells, from which people were drawing water in yak-hide buckets fastened to ropes over pulleys. Women with enormous prong-shaped headdresses, bead-strung and jeweled, were among them, some of them colorful, clean and beautiful. Tramping along with them was the usual tattered, bathless throng. Good horses, mules, and donkeys were mixed in with the human horde, some of the animals with red yak tails and bells hung around their necks. The usual quota of fierce Tibetan mastiffs, many of them chained, gave the impression they would bite at the slightest excuse. Crozier thought to himself that they would frighten even the most powerful and disgruntled Tibetan gods.

"If we were at home, I'd know what all these people were doing," Spencer remarked. "They'd be Christmas shopping. I suppose they're just shopping —or, maybe it's Buddha's birthday."

The British officers and Indian soldiers conducted them on through the throngs of people toward the British Trade Agency on the southwestern edge of this city of five thousand people. As they rode into the Trade Agency area, Crozier saw a field about one hundred by fifty yards enclosed by an adobe wall.

On it he glimpsed a tennis court which the captain said was paved with concrete blocks brought across the Himalayas from India on the backs of yaks, mules, and ponies.

"How do you manage to play the game at this altitude?" Crozier asked.

"It is difficult," the captain replied. "One has to pause every few strokes and rest."

Men and mounts drew up to the Trade Agency building, constructed on a delta between the Nyang River and a tributary, a house built of timber, stone, and sun-dried bricks. The Agency headquarters was arranged around a courtyard, which they entered. The captain invited them onto a verandah and into quarters which opened onto it, then showed them a nearby mess hall that also led onto the gallery. Above the porch was a balcony and upper rooms used for storage.

The airmen found the first-floor quarters cozy and clean, with hot fires of wood and yak dung already burning. Servants bustled about helping them bring supplies to their rooms, for Fort Knox and the others had arrived almost immediately behind them. Other servants carried excess gear to the upstairs space.

As soon as the crew was comfortably situated, the captain summoned an Indian army medical officer. Since the doctor had no X-ray equipment, he could not be sure whether Huffman's shoulder was broken or not. He gave Huffman his best professional attention, then prescribed medication for the Americans' colds and influenza. Crozier was relieved to find that none of them had pneumonia because he was told in Lhasa that the disease was nearly always fatal in Tibet on account of the altitude and severe cold. The doctor gave them a supply of vaseline for their

chapped and wind-burned faces, enough to last the remainder of their journey.

The five wing-clipped men rejoiced in their comfortable quarters and reveled in hot baths in front of warm fires. They drenched one another with buckets of ice water after getting out of the tubs, as they feared they might become chilled later.

After they had bathed, the British captain returned and informed Crozier that, since they had been expecting them, he had planned a Christmas party in their honor that night.

"We've invited twenty-five or thirty guests—Tibetan government officials and influential leaders," the captain said. "Since you're Americans, they're looking forward to meeting you with uncommon interest."

Crozier didn't see how some of them could go. Huffman's shoulder was agonizingly painful and he was also sick and sore from influenza as well. Crozier himself was miserable from the flu and wanted only to go to bed. He told the captain so.

"I sympathize with you, Lieutenant," the captain responded. "I know how you feel. But I strongly urge that you come and stay up long enough to meet the people. You are the leader, and they will expect you. They would not understand if you did not come. I'll help you to get away as soon as possible after the formalities."

Crozier agreed that all would attend the party except Huffman. After getting him and his painful shoulder to bed, the others prepared to go. As Huffman crawled into bed, Spencer said:

"After the war, I'll bet you stay away from mules and parachutes, not to mention planes."

Just before they set out for their first social eve-

ning in Tibet, Crozier paused long enough to watch dusk settle down on the massive fort of Gyantse.

"I don't feel like a diplomat, but I got to be one," Crozier complained to the others as they watched darkness gather. "What say we put on our best smile, fellows? The show of international politeness must go on."

At the party, the British captain welcomed them, introducing them to high government officials and other guests from wealthy homes. Among them was a beautiful Tibetan girl, daughter of one of the government leaders. She had a degree from an English university, and the captain later told Crozier that the young woman wanted to leave Tibet and marry an Englishman; but the father objected, insisting she take a Tibetan spouse and remain at home. Judging from what the captain said about the Tibetan beauty, Crozier got the idea he was lending her aid and comfort on the sly in her aspirations to escape her mountain-walled homeland.

After the formality of shaking hands with everyone present, Crozier was taken aside by the British captain and given a generous drink of Scotch and allowed to leave the party. He departed immediately for his quarters, leaving Spencer, Parram, and McCallum behind for the Christmas festivities.

The Tibetans seemed to be good party people, animated, happy, and imbued with the joy of living. They gambled with dice, drank *chang* and *arak*, sang and danced, and did not forget their buttered tea.[2]

"How did you like the *arak*?" McCallum asked Spencer aside after they had sampled the beverage, the first they had been offered in Tibet. Heretofore, they had tasted only *chang*.

[2] *Arak* is a liquor distilled from barley.

"Thanks, no more of that for me," the radio operator declined. "It tastes like kerosene."

But Spencer had to go back on his word, since beautiful Tibetan girls with long pins in their hands moved among the guests with more *arak* and *chang*, urging them to take another round.

"You should pay strict attention to the long pins," the British captain told his American visitors. "Custom gives them the right to stick those pins in any guest who hestitates or refuses to take another drink when it's offered."

The Tibetans present also threw dice to see who would have to take a drink, in addition to their gambling with the dotted cubes.

While the guests drank, servants moved among them with an hors d'oeuvre which the Americans first took to be a jawbreaker kind of candy, but they discovered on tasting it that it was a dried, rocklike cheese which had to be sucked instead of bitten.

While the Tibetans sang gaily in their own language, the English officers told the three crewmen that some of the lively verses were impromptu ones about the crew and its adventure in Tibet. The louder the Tibetans sang their songs, the more they laughed and giggled.

Reinforced by their hosts' Christmas cheer from Scotland and a hearty quaff or two of the Tibetan *chang* and *arak*, McCallum, Parram, and Spencer agreed to sing, also, their choices being nostalgic songs of the season from their world so far away. Their Tibetan listeners liked "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" and "Jingle Bells" best of all the Christmas songs they harmonized. Between songs, the trio learned with surprise that many of the Santa

Claus beards in the United States came from yak hair in Tibet.

The guests were served a fine Christmas dinner of Chinese, British, and Tibetan dishes, including a dish made from flour and eggs and a fine, pastelike spaghetti.

The airmen enjoyed the company of the Tibetans and felt at ease among them. The Tibetans were certainly there for a good time and not from a sense of duty. These people, through education and general sophistry, knew something of the Western world; even so, their lively curiosity about the Americans prompted endless questions.

Toward the end of the party, the British captain confided to Spencer that, if he could get his wish for Christmas, he would like a harmonica. Sometimes he was homesick, he said, or time was heavy on his hands. Spencer made a mental note to write to his family when he got back to India, asking his father to send the captain the best harmonica he could find.[3]

[3] Spencer followed up on his resolve when he arrived back in India. His father mailed the British captain a harmonica from Rockville Center, Long Island, to Gyantse.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

NEXT MORNING, CHRISTMAS DAY, CROzier made a decision to stay in Gyantse until all members of the crew were feeling better. He, Huffman, and Parram—the latter having been hit by a serious case of flu during the night—stayed in bed while McCallum and Spencer got up to see the town. By afternoon, Crozier was on the mend, and moved out to sit in the sunlight on the front porch of their quarters. Resting in the sun's rays, he found his jacket uncomfortably hot, although the temperature was five degrees below zero. He pulled off his jacket, and in his shirtsleeves, found he was not cold as long as he remained in the sun.

Later in the afternoon, McCallum joined him, at first sitting in the shade, where he complained of the cold. Crozier displayed no sympathy.

"Get out of the shade and get in the sun here," he advised the copilot, "and you'll have to shuck that jacket. If you'll look at the tea in the teapot in my room, you'll find it's frozen since the fire went out this morning. But it's been too hot with my jacket on here in the sun."

As McCallum moved over toward the sunny spot occupied by Crozier, the English captain strolled up.

"I hope you chaps are feeling better by now," he greeted them politely.

"Definitely better, thank you," Crozier replied promptly. "I'm warm as toast as long as I'm here in the sun. McCallum was complaining of the cold

while sitting in the shade just now, and I advised him to move over here."

"Captain," McCallum addressed the English officer, "why is there such a temperature change between the sun and shade up here in Tibet? I've never experienced anything like it before."

"It's the atmosphere at this altitude," answered the captain quickly. "Heat in this rarefied atmosphere does not radiate."

The English captain sat with them for an hour or so and talked about Tibet, as he did on other afternoons in the sun. Crozier marveled at the captain's strange tales and his precise, detailed knowledge of the country. He asked the captain about the Queen Sow of the Thunderbolt, the little priestess at Yamdrok Lake. The captain said he had heard talk that the little girl chosen as the Queen Sow was not the true reincarnation. Crozier couldn't help wondering about what would happen to her mystic powers if she should be deposed.

"If she got kicked out," he mused idly to himself, "would her power to change men into pigs remain behind in the monastery, or go with her?"

He smiled and chuckled at the thought, even though he did not feel well enough to be amused about anything.

In two or three days, the crew felt much better. Even Huffman with his broken shoulder was up and wanted to see the town. They were allowed complete freedom of movement, so they decided to do their Christmas shopping late.

They set out for the big *chorten* at the foot of the hill on which the fort and monastery rested, as they knew the market was near. Reaching it, they found it much like thousands of other bazaars in the East,

full of cheap Indian and Chinese goods, an assemblage of shops consisting of stalls, tables, and mats spread on the ground. They found jewelry, rugs, and brick tea, the latter imported from China on the backs of coolies and yaks. They bought souvenirs, among them butter lamps and a piece of green jade the size of a drinking glass for the equivalent of ten American dollars. They stocked up on matches from Japan.

Among the Tibetans striding about the marketplace, they found thirty retired Indian soldiers living out their remaining years in Gyantse.

They found most of the merchants sitting among the rugs and yellow blankets of the marketplace were women, some of whom wore the highly-decorated wooden headdresses they had seen in Lhasa, the arched frames set with pearl and turquoise. All the women, wearing rings on their fingers and charm boxes around their necks, sat near their goods chatting and gossiping among themselves. Since the fierce upland sun was out and it was midday, some of them sought refuge under large umbrellas opened over the boxes, planks, and walls of brick which served as places of business. The British captain told the crew that the shops, which were rented from the monastery, stayed open only during the middle of the day, opening late and closing early.

Ponies, mules, and donkeys stood around everywhere, and dogs stuck their noses into everything while the populace bought barley, *chang*, butter, fresh and dried mutton, soda, salt, and fish from Yamdrok Lake. Customers bargained with energy while buying wooden cups and bowls, dyes, yak tails, saddle blankets, bells, teapots, turquoises, and anything else the shopkeepers had for sale.

That night the British captain told Crozier that the next day was an occasion when the public was admitted to the Buddhist shrines. He offered to take the crew through the giant *chorten* at the foot of the hill near the monastery and also promised to escort them to a Tibetan wrestling match, which he assured them was unlike anything they had ever seen before.

Next morning they set out for the *chorten.* As they approached it, they heard the deep, sonorous voices of chanting monks who were entering a chapel inside it. They followed them into the *chorten,* where they found hundreds of joss sticks burning, darkening the room with the heady incense of their smoke. Hundreds of flickering butter lamps added a thick, acrid pall. Some of the monks were going about putting more butter into the lamps with spoons while others brought in a big cauldron of tea and poured the hot, buttered beverage into the wooden bowls of their waiting brothers.

"I've heard," Crozier said quietly aside to the English captain, "that some of the monks drink their share of the *chang* in this country."

"Not these," replied the captain quickly. "They drink only tea. Should they drink *chang* or *arak,* they would be expelled from the monastery."

One of the monks, in richer robes than most of the others, approached the British captain and they spoke briefly to each other in Tibetan.

"He wishes to confer a blessing for the remainder of your journey," the captain said. "Follow me."

They walked among the squatting, tea-drinking monks to the front of the smoke-filled little chapel, where the one who had spoken to the captain received a ceremonial sword from another. He touched the

head of each of the airmen with the blade, murmuring a few brief words, the captain translating.

"He blesses each of you and prays for your safety for the remainder of your journey down to India," the captain interpreted. "He assures you that you will soon triumph over your enemies. He says that the next man to attain Buddhahood will be a man of the Western world like yourselves. He invites you to see everything and go to the top of the shrine."

They took leave of the kind, friendly monk and walked around the shrine from left to right, following Buddhist custom, peering into dark niches filled with the gods and saints of Lamaism.

They went to the top of the *chorten*, which they found covered by thick, polished copper plates. From the cupola, under the copper-plated dome, they saw the flat-topped houses below and the dark fort and whitewashed monastery on the nearby hills and ridge above. They found the town laid out roughly in the shape of a reaping hook or quarter-moon. Beyond the city were the irrigated valley and distant mountains, their gray and yellow sides broken here and there by lonely, isolated lamaseries.

They climbed down and started toward the Trade Agency. On the way they ran into several Tibetan prisoners, each loaded with chains weighing twenty or thirty pounds, some with their arms manacled and others with their arms through wooden blocks. These prisoners had been sent into the street to beg their food. After courting the crew with blandishments and failing, the prisoners' flattery turned to curses. Crozier gave them some money to be rid of them, after which they turned again briefly to gentility and smooth speech, then went on to seek others

from whom they might wheedle and execrate their daily fare.

That afternoon the captain, true to his promise of the night before, took the crew to the Tibetan wrestling match, at which several pairs joined battle. The crewmen found it just as the captain said, totally unlike anything they had seen before. The wrestlers were unknown to each other until just before they met, coming out of separate tents to fight. In one of the matches, a tall giant of a man strode out of one tent, a small, frail one rushing out of the other. The crowd roared with delight, then began a chant.

"What are they saying?" Crozier asked the captain.

"They're praying for the gods to come to the assistance of the little man," the Englishman replied.

They remained in Gyantse eleven days. The sick members of the crew were sufficiently recovered to resume the journey back to India in a week, with the exception of Huffman. Crozier wanted Huffman's shoulder to heal as much as possible before he exposed him again to the rigors of muleback travel. They still faced high, dangerous trails across at least two more winter-gripped passes.

It had taken only six days to come from Lhasa to Gyantse, even with bad luck, and Crozier hoped to go the remaining distance to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, in five more. If they succeeded in that, they could be down into India in less than another day, provided the mountain gods smiled on them.

"We'll bow from the waist on all the passes," Crozier thought to himself. "Might help to spin a prayer wheel or two. May Lord Buddha watch over us."

It would be a tight schedule. It was around a hundred and fifty to two hundred miles from Gyantse to Gangtok, and fifteen miles a day was good average caravan time. They were hoping to cover more than thirty miles each day. It usually took from twenty to thirty days to go from Lhasa to Gangtok, or to Kalimpong, in India. If they kept to their schedule, they would make it to Gangtok in eleven days of actual travel.

"Will it be a record if we make it?" Crozier asked the English captain.

"I'm sure I can't answer that question," he replied. "You will find milestones between here and Yatung. At least you can tell how many miles a day you travel between those points. But you had best keep up with it yourself if you wish to know. The Tibetans, like all Orientals, are notoriously inexact as to time and distance. I suppose you've been traveling about China, India—and now this country—long enough to know that."

"Sure," Crozier replied quickly. "By the way, how do the Tibetans tell time? It's a rare guy who has a watch here, I guess. They must have some way of measuring time."

"Oh, yes," answered the captain. "But, of course, they don't keep appointments exactly as you would. They have names for certain times of the day—for example, when the first rays of the sun hit the mountaintops in the morning, they call that 'peak-shining' time. But I should say most of them are concerned only with daytime, nighttime, and teatime."

They left Gyantse on January 5, 1944—the five Americans, Fort Knox, Rain, Shine, and Duncan, the cook—heading almost due south along the Indo-Tibetan caravan trail. The wide valley down which

they rode undulated from east to west for about twenty miles between ridges more than fifteen thousand feet above sea level. Ten or twelve miles out on the trail they would ride into a tributary depression only five or six miles in width—more of a canyon than a valley.

About half a mile from Gyantse's fort and monastery, the nine travelers crossed a flag-bedecked bridge over the Nyang River, where prayer pennants were flapping to torn shreds in the dusty wind. They had ridden out through willow trees on fresh mules, the lead animal's neck festooned with a red-dyed yak's tail, and the necks of the others hung with little tinkling bells. They rode over what would normally be called a plain, in reality a wide, rather fertile valley used to grow barley and wheat. It was dotted with the rock and sod abodes of peasants.

The gilded roofs, the villas, and residences of the town disappeared, the white walls of the monastery dropped from sight, then the great wall running over the steep ridges. Even the rock and sod huts became less frequent, the barley fields vanished, and the soil gave way to rock. People became less frequent, and the mountains, yellow, gray, and rocky, loomed closer.

About six or seven miles out, when Crozier turned to look back for the last time, Tibet's third largest town had disappeared completely from view, with the exception of the massive, thick-walled fort, which still loomed, seemingly desolate and isolated, upon its mountain base. Then, shortly thereafter, it, too, dropped over the horizon.

Just ahead lay a gorge or canyon, where they saw a little village, *chortens*, and a monastery huddled against the rugged walls of the defile. Above it, on

top of the cliff, was another massive fort, painted in stripes of red, white, and blue.

"They're displaying our colors," Crozier called back to McCallum, who was riding immediately behind him.

"Just a coincidence," McCallum replied. "Bet they haven't heard we're in a war."

"Bet they don't care if they have heard," Crozier shouted again.

They rode into the canyon, which was strewn with boulders—a bare, bald, naked land of ugly red sandstone. They hadn't gone far when they came to a huge figure of a Buddha carved onto the face of a rock taller than a high house. The Buddha gazed impassively down on the passing men and mules, no differently from the way he regarded the stone-strewn floor over which they moved.

They continued up the narrow, barren gorge, which reminded Crozier of country he had seen in Utah and Arizona, until they came to another little village, where they found their first dak bungalow, or rest house, in a grove of winter-stripped willows.[1] They paused long enough to eat a lunch of cold yak meat in the bungalow, where they were sheltered from the cold wind. They didn't tarry long, however, as Crozier urged them hurriedly back into their saddles. He wanted to make thirty miles that day, and to do it, they must reach the village of Kangmar, where the trail would turn from the south to southwest.

After a long afternoon of galling erectness astride

[1] This and other dak bungalows in which the crew later stayed belonged to the Government of India. In 1954, India handed over these rest houses and the telegraph and telephone lines she owned in Tibet to Red China, with value and payment to be worked out later. Afterward, India decided to waive payment.

the mules, and shaking with cold in the galelike wind, they reached Kangmar, a little village, dusty, desolate, and alone under a broken red cliff. Nothing ever seemed so welcome to Crozier as the firm rock walls of the dak bungalow, with its chairs, beds, and fireplace. Once inside the shelter, Duncan prepared yak-butter tea quickly. Bowl after bowl of the steaming hot beverage took the stiffness and shivers from their saddle-weary bodies.

Next morning, Crozier arose early and aroused the others because he estimated this would be their longest day on the trail. He wanted to cover more than their average daily quota of miles in this area, as he feared two high passes they had yet to conquer, especially if they found deep snow on them. It was not a good omen, therefore, when he went outside and found mixed snow and sleet swirling through the air. As he stepped from the bungalow before dawn, both dry, shotlike pellets of ice and soft flakes of snow hit his face.

They were on their way when the first faint streaks of light rose out of the east, riding through the early morning down the same narrow canyon by which they had come to Kangmar. The walls of the barren valley were crumbling and the light snow and shotlike sleet entered the cracks in the rocks and bounced off the giant boulders around which their caravan moved.

All along the trail they passed tumbling stone ruins, dilapidated *mani* walls, and crumbling *chortens*, a deserted devil's land of rock slides and wind erosion. Already the daily gale, which had risen early in the day, transported hordes of dust demons on its wings to slap fiercely at their faces. They could expect it to continue, bitterly cold and cutting,

till after they quit the trail. Crozier had found that the wind usually ceased blowing sometime during the night.

They already were getting sore throats again, which Crozier thought was caused by the swirling dust. He was certain the blowing dirt was causing the irritation, as he did not see how germs could live in this great open-air deep-freeze through which they were traveling.

This seemed an eerie land to Crozier. As his mule plodded past the cracked *chortens*, fallen monasteries, and weather-wracked *mani* monuments, his mind turned to some of the strange stories of this strange country he had heard back in Lhasa and Gyantse. There were two he would always remember, one which he called "The Cave Reincarnation," the other which he thought of as "The Wheel." He forgot the creaking saddle, numbing wind, mixed snow and sleet, and flying dust as he listened again to these stories with his mind's ear.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CROZIER RECALLED A STORY HE HAD heard in Gyantse which he now called "The Cave Reincarnation."

A long time ago (he had been told in Gyantse) a boy monk made his vows in a monastery high in the remote snow mountains of Tibet. This young *trapa* kept his vows well and grew to young manhood teaching in the end those who had taught him.[1]

As he grew older, this youthful priest of Lamaism cut himself off from the world and the society of his brothers for long periods, entering one of the monastery's cells for meditation. He saw only those who brought him food and drink.

At last, meditating constantly in his cubicle in the lamasery, he decided he must separate himself completely from the sight and sound of man, and he prevailed upon his brothers to seal him up in a cave on the side of a cliff above the cloister. A small opening would be left into which food and drink would be pushed.

He was only twenty years old the day his brother monks escorted him up the wooded valley toward the cliff cave which would be his living tomb. Tomb it would be because it was his vow that he would never come out alive, and no man would come in till he was dead.

A warm summer sun beat down on his handsome, close-cropped head as his brother *trapas* escorted

[1] *Trapa* is the Tibetan word meaning monk.

him alongside a foam-flecked mountain stream, then up a rocky trail to the mouth of the cave. Clad in a bright, clean robe, he walked inside and turned his back on his fellows, sitting down on the stone floor as they walled up the opening. The monks left a tiny slit at the bottom so bowls of food and tea could be pushed in, then shoved a stone against the hole as they left. They closed the cleft because their brother did not even wish to see the light of day again, or at least any more than was absolutely necessary.

The years passed, the monks dutifully pushing bowls of food and tea through the opening regularly. Inside, their hermit brother picked them up, ate and drank, and pushed the empty vessels outside. Sometimes he did not come for the food for several days. Then they knew he must be ill, in meditation, or not in need of food.

These years went by for the man inside the cave without heat, light, or a change of clothes, never a sight of the sun, or stars, or a glimpse of a human face. He performed his bodily functions in those close quarters without even the crudest of sanitary measures. Who could say whether he stood, sat, or walked about? Did he sleep at night and meditate by day? Who could say? For him, any hour was black as the pit, as his brothers always pushed the stone against the opening when they came with food. Did he pray for Buddhahood for himself, or others?

Finally, after forty years went by, the day came when he did not take his bowls of food and tea for so long that the monks knew he must be dead. They tore down the stones and found him on the floor of the cave in the rags and filth of four decades, his long white mane and beard completely covering his face.

Children who had followed him up to his living tomb now helped bear him down as middle-aged men.

They did not dispose of his body in the accepted way by hacking it to pieces and feeding it to the vultures. They cremated it, molded his ashes with sacred clay of their monastery, and stamped it with a holy seal. They built a giant *chorten,* in which they entombed the ashes and clay, all that remained of their departed brother.

He had entered the cave as a *trapa,* and now they deified him after death as an incarnate lama or living god. They began to search for the child into whose body he was born again.

After a few years, they found one who satisfied the demands of their tests, and they brought him in triumph to the monastery. They indoctrinated him, and he went up to the cave, lived and died, his body was burned, and his ashes molded with clay into the *chorten.* Then the cycle began again: the search, the discovery, the teaching, the cave, the cremation, the *chorten.*

Ages passed, and the way the story was told to Crozier, even now in the twentieth century, the reincarnation of a living god dwelled in the cave, or his undying spirit moved toward some new birth.

A shout from one of the crew that he was hungry as well as cold disturbed Crozier's reverie. He ordered a halt long enough for everyone to get out chunks of half-frozen yak meat, then told them they would eat in the saddle as the mules plodded ahead. After he finished his piece of meat, Crozier again became lost in thought. A story which he heard in Lhasa unfolded in his mind, the tale of a monk who

lived in contemporary times. Crozier had come to think of it as "The Wheel."

This *trapa* was given as one of two sons to a monastery tucked away in a deep gorge far in the western lands of Tibet. By the time he grew to manhood, he rose from acolyte to a contemplative and dedicated priest. He became another Buddha to his brothers, an awakened, an enlightened, an understanding god in the flesh. He prayed long and faithfully for wisdom as he gazed from his cell up the long slope of a sacred mountain. He pondered in the white cloisters and meditated in a dark grove of trees for the merit which would fulfill his destiny and make it complete. He thought continually on these things as he chanted with his brothers and performed his other holy rites.

One day, as he passed through the temple courtyard, he walked by a giant prayer wheel, the only one of its kind at the monastery. It was many times bigger and heavier than the small prayer wheels set in the masonry walls on the outside which visiting pilgrims turned with the flick of a finger. He tried moving the big cylinder, full of rolled strips of paper, on which a prayer was written thousands of times, and he found he could do so only with much effort. As he pushed the big wheel halfway around, he stumbled against a large gong hanging on the wall, and the heavy disk, made from the finest bell metal, gave a hint of its deep, harsh tone.

Later, he chanted and prayed long before the coming of the sun until long after it was gone, and the knowledge came to him how he must pay his sacred obligations, how he must win the holiness of life here and the saintliness of the time hereafter. He must spend the remainder of his days here in the hard phy-

sical effort of turning the great wheel. He sought permission of the abbot and it was granted.

One day, when the cutting cold wind of winter flung dust violently from sky to earth, the monk began his lifelong self-abasement to gain the penance necessary for the life to come. He started his daily toil at dawn, straining in every muscle to push the heavy cylinder. When he turned the wheel one complete revolution, thereby sending the prayers therein wafting toward the gods, he shouted at the top of his lungs:

"*Om mani padme hum.*"

Then picking up a large hammer, he struck the gong, its bold, frightening reverberations ringing through courtyard and cloister.

Each time he turned the wheel, he shouted the prayer and struck the gong, not from dawn till dusk, but from dawn till midnight, stopping only for the physical functions necessary to keep alive. After a few hours of sleep, he returned to the wheel before the sun's first rays hit the monastery's walls. In rain, in cold, in wind, in dust, in snow, in sun, in shade, in heat, he strove against the wheel, cried out his prayer, and struck the gong.

Pushed the wheel. Prayed. Struck the gong.

Somehow, as Crozier dwelled on the tale, these words, "pushed," "prayed," "struck," began to repeat themselves forlornly in rhythm with the hoofbeats of his mule.[2]

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[2] The Indian explorer, Sarat Chandra Das, tells in his *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet* of a similar case on Yamdrok Lake which he discovered October 24, 1882. "We stopped at the village of Shari, prettily situated between the Yamdo and a little sweet-water lakelet, and put up in the *mani lha khang*, the centre of which was taken up by a great prayer-wheel about six feet high and three feet in diameter. An old man lived here whose sole occupation was to turn the wheel." The words *mani lha khang* mean something like "The House of God and Prayer."

His mount stumbled slightly, and the rhythm left his mind. He returned to his present real world of cold, snow, wind, and dust. It seemed to him that he had mused on fantasy, yet this was a story that had been told to him as real. He wondered why he had become so completely lost in thought, so rapt in purposeless revery.

"Must be this lonely stretch of trail," he muttered to himself. "The wind and dust are bad today."

CHAPTER TWENTY

SHORTLY PAST NOON, THEY RODE through the village of Kala in a cloud of dust and soon came out on a broad plain created by the junction of two wide valleys. Here they found cultivated fields and saw an ice-covered lake, blue-green in tint, which they couldn't see across for the dust.[1] They traveled along its eastern edge for an hour or two, then turned south, leaving it behind. They were hardly out of sight of it when another icebound body of water met their view.[2] The pall of dust also hid most of it; however, they could see a little island locked in the ice on the northern end. They followed the trail along the western shore the remainder of the afternoon on flat ground covered with rusty red gravel. The trail was virtually clean of stones, but bordering it was a desert wilderness of small yellow, orange, and red rocks. To their right, high, bare cliffs frowned down on them.

It was dusk when they came to Dochen village, on the upper western shore. Here, at nearly fifteen thousand feet, they found the Dochen Rest House, and Crozier, with a sigh of relief, even a surge of joy, realized they had finished their longest day on the trail without mishap. Dochen was a village of few houses, built more like forts than homes. Crozier walked down to the edge of the lonely lake, a long liquid mirror reflecting the dying light from

[1] This was Kala Lake, about six or seven miles long and almost as wide.

[2] This was Dochen, Rham, or Otter Lake, a little larger than Kala.

the fading, dusky sky. The wind had died and the waters were stilled. The solitude seemed so real that Crozier felt in company with it. It seemed that isolation, remoteness, and seclusion had joined him as companions.

Duncan soon had a hot meal and tea, and they went to bed, safe from the outside cold. They were happy in the thought that tomorrow, even if it were as bad, would not be as long as they would have a few less miles to go.

Next morning, they were given fresh mounts, arranged by the government as before, and were delighted to start off in crisp, clear weather. The wind had not risen again, and the air was still as the rocks, around which the mules picked their sure-footed way. Here, in this desolate country, which rose from thirteen thousand to more than sixteen thousand feet, the landscape lost some of its untoward, oppressive character with the wind dead and the sun ruling the sky. The air was clear as fine crystal and the dust was gone.

Both the nearby boulders and the far hills and cliffs of rusty yellow were sharp and bold. Great mountains, far in the distance, seemed near—blue ranges which, if they had been shrouded in tropical heat, or windblown silt—would have receded into the hazy depths of distance.

Only a few miles from the Dochen dak bungalow, they rode past the village of Guru, still on the desolate, stony plain near a peak going up to nearly eighteen thousand feet.

"This is the place where the British and Tibetans had a big battle in 1904," Crozier told McCallum as they rode abreast on the wide, stone-free track.

"Ringang told me an interesting story about it in Lhasa, so I made a note on my map."

"What happened?"

"Well, the British forces and the Tibetan army were drawn up facing each other trying to work out a truce. Both commanders were scheduled to meet to talk things over. The British warned the Tibetans not to try any monkey business at the truce talk. When the British and Tibetan leaders came face to face, the English commander stuck out his arm to shake hands. An aide to the Tibetan officer, ignorant of the custom, thought the English officer meant to do harm to his superior, so he drew his sword in a flash and cut off the British officer's hand. The English opened fire, and many died here on the rusty red rocks along this trail."

"Everybody would have been better off if they had continued to shake heads instead of hands," McCallum observed sagely. "A good negative approach is better than a bad positive one anytime. Glad we didn't try to patch things up with that crowd in Lhasa by shaking hands."

Before midday, they reached Tuna, and shortly after noon they were in sight of Mount Chomolhari, rising to twenty-four thousand feet southeast of them.[3] At Tuna, they looked down on the lake from high banks to a shore of steep cliffs on the other side leading up to a vast stretch of lonely plain. This level land rolled away, misty and indefinite, before the mighty mountain plunged up bold and strong out of the haze at its base. It rose at first a black mass, then white, cold, and aloof to all things save the sky and clouds. Here was a wide vista of sun,

[3] The name of this peak has been translated variously into English as "Goddess of the Mountains" and "Mountain of the Goddess."

shadows, ice, and desert. The wind had begun to rise, bringing clouds and a brownish-red pall of dust which swept around some of the other white peaks and ice walls on the Tibetan-Bhutan border; but the heights of Chomolhari still stood out bold and clear against an azure patch of sky. By the time they reached the Tang or Clear Pass, about five miles due west of the steep shoulders of this great icebound ridge, a gale, fantastic in its strength and frigid breath, was blowing; but still the mountain was clear and unshrouded by the gathering clouds. Between the caravan and the mountain, dust was rising from the rock-strewn, brown earth, and from the peaks and ridges of Chomolhari, the raging wind was tearing great sheets of broken ice and snow. These long windblown banners were in the shape of streaming plumes, which looked like fog, or the white pall of a forest fire, stretching away for miles.[4]

Great glaciers, grinding everything before them, crept down the side of Chomolhari from the eternal mantle of snow and ice. These tongues of rock, ice, and rubble were twisted, broken, and serrated, their edges notched with teeth as sharp as a steel saw. Like giant bulldozers, they were scraping and moving the mountain and wearing it down. But from the fliers' perspective, these rivers of ice were like molded waterfalls, all foam, delicate, and flowing.

"A mountain is not like a man," Crozier thought to himself. "A man wears out his clothes, but the

[4] These plumes, which Himalayan peaks often wear on their snow caps like ladies wear feathers on their hats, stream far from the glittering, fearsome precipices. In 1933, two Englishmen in the first plane flight over Mount Everest tried to enter the plume of that mountain. The wind blew with such force that particles of ice broke one of the plane's windows.

cold shroud of the mountain finally wears the mountain out."

He gazed at the long, flying, foglike plume and grinned in spite of the wind and cold.

"Could I be absorbing some of the wisdom of Buddha?" he asked himself facetiously.

Across Tang Pass, the air seemed to become more moist, and therefore, more disagreeable. The rocks began to thin out, now that they had left the desolate, stone-strewn "Plain of the Three Brothers."

"I believe there were more small stones on the ground we've just been over than any stretch of ground I've ever seen," Crozier said to McCallum.

"You can say that again, Chief," McCallum agreed. "Ten thousand men could pick up stones back there and haul them away till they were too old to work, and I doubt that a single rock would be missed."

They passed a caravan of swarthy muleteers going in the opposite direction, their faces turned almost black by the winter gales. These Tibetans, wearing turquoise earrings, smiled friendly smiles as they drove their heavily laden yaks along.

They continued their slow, cold trek down the yellowish, rusty valley. After a while, a gray tower of rock loomed in the far distance, lording it over the surrounding plain and apparently never coming any closer. At first, Crozier thought it was a hill, or a peculiar, peaked bank of cloud; but then he decided it must be the mediaeval fort at Phari coming into view.[5] The square, blocklike fortress assumed all sorts of shapes. For a while it looked like a distant headland on some rocky ocean shore rather than a

[5] Phari means "Hog Hill," an aptly named Tibetan market town.

building made by man. Then again it looked like some giant's castle in a fairy tale.

They arrived in the outskirts of the town late in the afternoon, down a winding trail from the lofty, wide, and windswept spaces through which they had been riding. Crozier glanced back up the track and saw little black dots of men, mules, and yaks in another caravan coming down the high road from Gyantse. He shifted his gaze to the northeast. Chomolhari Peak, about fifteen miles away, was still standing like a sentinel over the whole neighboring scene of red boulders, clad in her robe of bluish-green ice.

The crew was soon riding under the thick, inward-sloping walls of the gray fort, which rose about two hundred feet over the surrounding level land. Both square and rounded citadels towered above the walls at intervals, and the windows, mere slits in the thick-walled masonry, were painted red, orange, and green. On top of the fort was a golden pavilion, in the streets below, dark filth.

The lanes through which the mules picked their way were mere alleys, narrow and filled with bones, rags, old cans, and excrement. The outside walls of some of the houses were plastered with yak dung, the imprints of the hands that placed it there plainly visible. When the crew passed the public toilets, completely open on every side to the blustery, cold winds, Crozier decided the inhabitants of Phari were as remote from sanitation as human beings could ever get. He thought Phari was the filthiest town he had ever seen except one village in China, the name of which he could not remember. There, he recalled as he rode along, sewage had run down the gutters in a damp, semitropical climate to the high

offense of his nostrils. Here, despite the refuse of hundreds of years in the narrow spaces between houses, there was little or no odor because of the dry, bitterly cold climate. In fact, the smoke from burning yak dung had a pleasant smell to it, like the cow-chip smoke from the huts along Calcutta's Barrackpore Road on a fine morning in late autumn.

As they continued through the streets, some of the townspeople, with their worn rags almost falling from their bodies and wearing a lifetime's accumulation of grease and dirt, stood and gaped at them. Some of these people followed curiously as the caravan made its way toward the travelers' bungalow.

A few of the houses they passed were constructed of rock and masonry, but most of the town's wretched habitations were built of blocks of earth with the floors several steps below the level of the ground. These sunken floors kept out the wild wind blowing across this plainlike valley more than fourteen thousand feet above the level of the sea. Over all these homes stood sticks and poles of ragged flags eternally flapping old, shredded prayers for the numberless desires of the men and women who put them there.

On the way to the dak bungalow, not far from the fort, they found a small reservoir with a tiny island in the middle of it. Five or six dirty Tibetans at the side of a small, man-high shrine stared as Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine broke the ice so the mules could drink.

The only clean spot they found in the town was the home of the district governor, near the bungalow; however, they were not invited in to yak-butter tea.[6] But Crozier and his crewmen were not too

[6] On page 94 of the book, *Out of This World*, by Lowell Thomas, Jr.,

critical of Phari's soapless citizens. They realized they were not altogether sweet, neat, and unsullied themselves.

They found the travelers' caravansary, a low structure with a flat roof, built around a courtyard, where they stabled and fed their mules. Inside, they discovered a rare luxury for this land—wood for a fire. Duncan quickly built a blaze from the boughs and logs, which gave off an aromatic scent. Fort Knox disappeared and soon returned with *chang* put up in wooden bottles, and all had one each before Duncan served a dinner of boiled rice and mutton. After dinner, the crew sat in front of the log fire, reveling in the finest treasure men could have in Tibet. While stretched out before the fire, Crozier decided to have another bottle of *chang*. Before he finished it, he went to sleep, the wooden container falling to the floor with a clatter. Everyone laughed and went to bed.

Next morning, they began a stage of the journey which carried them down to lower altitudes in the Chumbi Valley, but they would have to climb another high pass of more than fifteen thousand feet before they were out of Tibet. As they moved along through the cold morning between Phari and Kamparab, the next village, they saw many black tents of Tibetan nomads on the horizon. At Kamparab, and also at Gotsa, which was only a few more miles down the trail, they found other people using wood for fuel, as the timberline was not too far away.

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the district governor at Phari is reported as telling Thomas and his father when they were in Tibet that he was the man who rescued Crozier and his crew after they bailed out of the craft. Actually, the five Americans never saw him, even while in Phari. The plane crashed approximately 225 miles to the northeast.

At Gotsa, Fort Knox began pointing ahead and calling out, "Tromo! Tromo!" Crozier and McCallum tried to find out what he was talking about, but failed. Fort Knox's English was not good enough, and their Tibetan was too bad.[7]

Just south of Gotsa, they dipped into the Chumbi Valley, which lies between Bhutan and Sikkim, drained by the Amo, known as "The River of Milk." They followed this raging, iceless mountain stream much of the way through the Chumbi Valley, often on a rather smooth, rock-paved trail, watching the white rapids and falls, which looked in reality like so much foaming milk. Crozier decided the stream was aptly named.

It was here they saw a strange, large bird with a beard that had some of the characteristics of a buzzard, yet it also looked like an eagle.

The first vegetation they encountered, outside of withered clumps of grass, was dwarfed rhododendron bushes at about twelve to thirteen thousand feet. As they rode further into the Chumbi, winding down and down, fir, sycamore, birch, and willow trees gradually began to appear. The lower they went, the higher the rhododendron bushes grew. They found apple and pear trees and fields for barley cultivation near the villages.

It was a starkly precipitous trail down a narrow gorge to the main Chumbi Valley town of Yatung, Tibet's fourth largest city, on the banks of the foamy Amo. They came to a spot early in the afternoon where a small, ill-defined trail led to a shrine at which Fort Knox insisted all the Tibetans of the caravan must stop; otherwise, they risked death, or

[7] "Tromo" is a proper name applied by the Tibetans to the Chumbi Valley. It means "Land of Wheat."

worse. To the best of Crozier's understanding, a deity of that neighborhood had once disguised himself as a beggar and had sought refuge in a local monastery. He was not only turned away by the abbot and some of the monks, but he also was viciously kicked into the bargain. The guilty monks later died horrible deaths, seized savagely by fits and fever; therefore, Fort Knox, Rain, Shine, and Duncan were taking no chances. They made off up the side trail, returning in respectable time from offering their prayers, and the caravan continued onward to Yatung.

After riding for an hour or so, they arrived at a quiet, lonely spot, surrounded by firs and pines, pastures and rhododendron bushes, where they found a cemetery beside the trail. Under the wind-tormented trees were a dozen or so dreary, desolate graves with humble markers indicating Englishmen were buried here.

"What manner of men were these?" Crozier thought to himself. "Why did they choose the remotest spot on earth from their homeland to live and die? What prompted them? Were they dedicated to serving the Empire? Did they seek knowledge? New thoughts and things? Escape? Or were they merely adventurers, men with restless feet and hearts who always wanted to see what was on the other side of the mountain?" Crozier thought of Rupert Brooke's poem about the corner of a "foreign field that is forever England" and wished he could remember it all. He wondered if that was the way these men felt about dying here in this strange land among strange gods.

Leaving the little cemetery, they rode until about the middle of the afternoon, when they came in sight

of a row of tall, white *tarchos* or flagpoles with prayer flags nailed to the tops.

"Soshima, Soshima!" Fort Knox called out as soon as the long poles and wind-battered pennants met their gaze. As they plodded wearily under them, Fort Knox pointed upward to the prayer pennants and repeated emphatically, "Much money, much money."[8]

Even though Yatung was Tibet's fourth largest town, they found it to be no more than a village of five hundred people. Had it been at sea level, Crozier believed he could have thrown a stone across it. Four long rows of timber houses hugged both sides of two cobbled streets, the dark evergreen forest and rhododendron thickets creeping down from the slopes and cliffs on one edge of town, the Amo River a straight torrent of noisy foam on the other. As their mules trudged patiently into the village, Crozier noticed that the rustic shingles of the chalet-type houses were held down by large rocks. As they approached a bazaar of little shops, Crozier glanced among the houses across the river and spotted a rough rail fence of exactly the same kind he often had seen in Texas.

Yatung was built at the narrowest and deepest part of the valley. Although it was a bright, clear day, the town was in shadow and the sun was gone. Crozier looked up around him and decided the surrounding cliffs must be three thousand feet high. Sunshine could never reach the people of the village for more than an hour or two in the middle of the day.

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[8] Yatung is called "Soshima" by the Tibetans. Fort Knox probably meant the monks would want a large fee for putting up a prayer flag for an unschooled sinner.

"Nobody will ever get sunburned here," Crozier remarked to McCallum.

"You said it, Skipper," the copilot replied. "It'd take a hot pilot to fly out of here."

Except for the heavy rocks on the roofs and the evergreens, the town and its setting reminded Crozier of Moab, Utah, peaceful and isolated among the cottonwoods in its deep canyon along the upper reaches of the Colorado River.

As they rode slowly past the bazaar, they became aware of a long swirl of dust sweeping into the street at the other end of town. Under the dusty veil, a long caravan came toward them. The hooves of running ponies drummed on the ground, rounding up stray yaks. Bells tinkled from the necks of mules, and huge dogs ran along, barking, adding to the din of whooping, whistling muleteers, who threw rocks at their slow-moving charges.

As the crew's caravan drew abreast of the bigger one, filling the narrow street, two of the muleteers began shouting loudly and angrily at each other from their ponies, obviously at the brink of a fight. These two men, like the others with them, wore plaited pigtails tied on top of their heads with bright red ribbons, and if any stranger thought that made these mule drivers effeminate, he had only to take one look at their faces to change his mind. Each of these men had the sharp visage of a hawk, with skin like scarred leather, tough, hardened, and bronzed by the sun and wind.

Still clamoring at the top of their voices, the two angry muleteers leaped surefootedly to the ground from their saddles, facing each other squarely with their hands on the hilts of both knives and swords at their waists. With the speed of light, each drew

his sword, leaving the shorter knives at their belts, and as they circled each other warily in their long leather boots, one of them reached up and adjusted his gleaming earring. Other muleteers dismounted and swiftly gathered around as the two began feeling each other out with their long blades. Dogs began ringing the two fighting men, barking even louder at this new excitement. Villagers joined the growing crowd, even women, and one young mother held her bundled baby over her head so the child would not miss a single blow. The women largely stood with openmouthed fascination, while most of the men's faces were hard and impassive.

The two men plunged, slashed, and thrust at each other for perhaps ten minutes, waving, cutting, and striking with their blades till finally one smote the head of the other a glancing blow, the keen edge laying the scalp open. Blood spurted out, staining the muleteer's red hair ribbon a darker crimson.

That seemed to be the signal for the end of the fight, as the muleteers who watched the fray with intent faces now broke into smiles and laughter as the vanquished one stood holding his sword hand on his wound while the victor sheathed his weapon and strode haughtily away. Evidently the loser was not badly hurt. At least, the crowd did not seem highly concerned.

"Now what do you suppose they were fighting about?" McCallum asked curiously.

"Just a couple of crazy cowboys, as they say down in Texas," replied Crozier.

"I'll say one thing," Spencer volunteered. "These Tibetan mule skinners are tough."

"Yeah," agreed Huffman. "These guys would be handy in a brawl."

"Well," remarked Parram, "if they got in a war I was in, I hope it'd be on my side."

As the spectators slowly began to drift off from the scene of the fight and the big caravan got slowly under way again, Crozier pulled his map from inside his *chupa* and studied it a minute.

"We're only six or seven miles from Nathu Pass," he announced, "and when we get there, we'll be on the border of Sikkim and Tibet. It's about four or five miles to the dak bungalow at Chumbitang. We ought to make it by night, even though it's uphill all the way."[9]

The trail ahead might be dangerous. Here in the narrow valley, they were down to nine or ten thousand feet in a profusion of pines and dark firs; but before they were out of Tibet, they would have to climb six or seven thousand rugged, rocky feet.

"It's cold enough here in the valley," Crozier remarked wearily. "God knows what it'll be on the pass. We *could* run into weather. This is damp country. We might see some heavy snow yet. We've been lucky on that score so far."

The mule caravan began its steep climb up the pass. They forded the swift, dangerous Amo River, iceless but cold, and plodded on through the dark, shadowy forests. Here they saw more of the stone, pagoda-like *chortens* and passed more *mani* walls, the Tibetan soldiers and cook always being careful to go to the left when coming to one of the walls. Crozier remembered what he heard in Lhasa as he passed these long piles of stone:

"The devils are always on the right side."

The trail usually stretched out on both sides of

[9] Nathu La, as the pass is called, means "Steep Pass."

the walls, so the devout could keep the prayer-inscribed stones between them and the evil spirits.

"The devils—or the travelers, I don't know which—would be in one hell of a shape," Crozier mused, "if two-way traffic got on both sides of the wall at the same time. Ah, the mysterious East."

On the way up the pass, they saw one of their last monasteries—Kargyu—home of a sect which may marry, quaff *chang*, and otherwise lead normal, worldly pursuits. In their last glimpse of it down below, as they rode up the trail, its golden roof shone in the light of the sun, which came briefly from behind gathering dark clouds just over the ridgetop. The boiling, rolling mist and murk raced up the deep, winding valley and massed against the steep slopes above. It soon began to snow—the most, the thickest, and the wettest—they had seen in Tibet. But still it was not nearly as much as Crozier had expected they would see on the journey. Monkeys swung from tree to tree and ran chattering through the snow.

They paused to let the mules rest, as they were breathing hard.

"I always thought monkeys lived in hot countries up to now," Spencer said as he saw the first ones running through the snowflakes.

"I saw thousands of them around Naini Tal, down in India," Parram joined in. "That's high, cool country."

"Yeah, about the same altitude as the town we just went through," Huffman observed.

"I understand the Tibetans think people originally came from monkeys," McCallum said. "They've had the idea for thousands of years."

"Yeah?" Crozier spoke up. "Then they were way ahead of that fellow—what was his name?"

"Darwin?"

"Yeah, that's the guy."

"I read an old fable down in India," the copilot began, "which said in effect that monkeys got started as a sort of practical joke."

"How's that?" asked Crozier.

"Well, it seems a long time ago some ancient, old-time Hindus went hunting. When they got near home with the animals they'd killed, they decided it would be a grand idea to fasten some of the animals' long tails on themselves and scare hell out of their wives.

"Well, they did, and sure enough, their old ladies were panic-stricken at first, the husbands running around practically yelling with laughter.

"After a while, these comical hunters decided they'd had enough fun and reached behind them to pull the tails off. Were they surprised! The tails wouldn't come off. The gods had decided to teach them a lesson for frightening the womenfolk. While these guys weren't looking, the gods had fastened the tails on securely for a lifetime.

"It was now the husbands' turn to be frightened. The more they tugged at the tails, the harder they stuck. Somehow or other the whole thing now struck the wives as funny. As they whooped louder and louder, the husbands became fully terrorized and took to the trees.

"They were so ashamed of their tails, they shunned human company and began to live in the trees, rarely coming down. And that's how monkeys got started," concluded the copilot.

Everyone laughed.

"That's the first time I ever knew the Indians had a sense of humor," Spencer spoke up.

"Yeah," agreed Huffman. "The Chinese see the funny side of life, but not the Indians."

"Let's go," interrupted Crozier. "I imagine the smiles in that little monkey tale belong to McCallum. Anyway we've wasted enough time monkeying around here with monkey stories. We've spelled these mules enough. It's getting late."

Everyone mounted and started the climb again.

The trail became more steep and narrow, dangerous even without the snow. The fresh, white blanket made it doubly treacherous. Everyone dismounted—even Parram, whose feet were still a little sore—and led his mule. The clouds closed in below and above, making it a whitish-gray, ghostly world along the edge of space. They had to stop every few yards to let the mules rest and get their breaths.

Dusk, then darkness, fell, with the wild, cold wind which brought the clouds beginning to drift the snow in spots. Soon after the last light faded, they arrived at the dak bungalow of Chumbitang, where they forgot the fears and perils of the track by a roaring wood fire. It was good to stretch out before the leaping flames, just a couple of miles under the pass from where they would leave the Land of God.

Crozier was determined to rise early the next morning and be on the way by first light, as, according to the schedule he had set, they must be in Gangtok, the Sikkimese capital, at the end of tomorrow's ride. So they went to bed early.

Crozier had just stretched out his long, tired legs in the darkness when he heard a slight noise outside the bungalow. It sounded as if someone or something had bumped into the house.

Fort Knox started up quickly, and in a nervous voice, loud enough to be heard plainly, yet low enough to convey a kind of secret urgency, called out. "*Migu! Migu!*"

"What's he saying, McCallum?" Crozier asked, raising his head. "Did you hear that noise?"

"Yeah, I heard the noise, Chief," McCallum responded. "Sounded like someone staggering around outside. Nope, I don't know what he means."

"*Migu! Migu!*" Fort Knox repeated the words again. Crozier heard him move the bolt on his rifle. "*Migu! Migu!*" He repeated it a time or two more. Then, "*Yeti! Yeti!*"

"He said something else there," Crozier spoke again as he raised up. "What was it? Anybody know? He's getting skittish. Hear him throw that rifle bolt?"

"*Migu! Yeti!*" Fort Knox repeated the words. It was almost a whisper, yet distinctly audible.

"Oh!" exclaimed McCallum in tones which conveyed understanding. "He means the snowman!"

"The what?" asked Crozier in a tense voice as he got up and moved into the light of the fire.

"The snowman," McCallum repeated. "Haven't you heard of him? People in these mountains believe there's a manlike animal that lives high up in the snow country. I understood the word *yeti* when Fort Knox used it. That's the word for the snowman. I read about it in the Calcutta paper, the *Statesman.*" He paused. "*Migu,*" he repeated. "I don't know about that. Maybe that's Tibetan for snowman. Some Englishman first started calling him that—'the abominable snowman' he called him."[10]

[10] *Migu* is the Tibetan term for the legendary creature. The word *yeti* is probably Nepalese and has been used extensively in English-language accounts of it.

"Well, get old Betsey," Crozier tersely advised McCallum, "and get on your boots and *chupa.* We'll take a look."

Both men dressed, McCallum drew his service pistol, Crozier borrowed Fort Knox's rifle, and the two went out together. A few minutes passed and they were back, stamping their feet to shake the snow from their boots.

"Did you see anything, sir?" Spencer asked Crozier.

"Nope," Crozier replied, "not even any tracks."

"Hear anything?"

"Not a sound, son."

"What is the snowman supposed to look like?" asked Huffman.

"Come to think of it," Crozier grinned, "I wouldn't have known it if I'd seen it. I just now heard of it for the first time."

McCallum laughed.

"Well, it's supposed to be hairy," he said. "Has a pointed skull and big feet. Lots of people in the Himalayas say they've seen its tracks, others say they've seen *it.* But nobody's captured one."

"Probably a bear," Crozier commented as he pulled off his boots. "Hope we can get some sleep, as we've got to get out of Tibet tomorrow unless there's a whole squadron of snowmen barring the way."

"*Migu,*" repeated Fort Knox, the shaky tone now gone from his voice.

Everyone again went to bed.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THEY WERE UP BEFORE DAYLIGHT next morning, packing and getting everything ready to travel with the first light. When Crozier went outside and felt the wind in his face, bitter, wetter, and more early than usual, he wondered whether they would ever make it to Gangtok that day, and when he saw the white blanket of snow on the ground in the first faint rays of dawn, he was inclined to doubt it. Between them and Gangtok was some of the highest and most treacherous trail of all.

As they mounted the mules, the wind drove into their faces, bringing a wet cold which caused them to shiver at the ordeal ahead. As they rode up the trail, even the surefooted mules slipped and slid in the unstable snow. Just as often as not, the white layer concealed a sizeable stone, tailor-made for a stumble. In many places, all of them dismounted and walked. Plugging ahead up the steep track, threshing about in the snow, wind, and cold at more than fourteen thousand feet, their lungs began to wheeze like old pump organs, and Crozier felt his legs trembling like piano wires vibrating to a fast tune. They had to stop often and rest themselves and their animals. Crozier worried constantly that a man or a mule would go off the trail.

About an hour after they left the bungalow, he found his fears were well-grounded when one of the pack mules slipped over the side. The mule rolled and tumbled over and over again down the slope,

tossing his pack, and ending up belly deep in a snowdrift. It was the work of an hour to gather up the scattered gear and get the mule, fortunately unhurt, back up the mountain. All of them, Tibetans and Americans, except Huffman, who was excused because of his battered shoulder, went up and down the slope recovering their belongings so the mule could clamber up unburdened. After resting longer than usual, they started out again.

As they walked and rode along, they caught glimpses of cold, rushing little streams through the snow-clad fir trees and rhododendron shrubs. They crossed some of these ice-bordered, rocky maelstroms on log bridges which swayed and wobbled dangerously. These bridges usually consisted of five or six logs, with the hollow spaces between them filled with gravel, rock, and dirt. A possible fall from a bridge did not worry Crozier nearly so much as the sure baptism of ice which would follow if one of the caravan took a plunge.

Three hours passed before they reached Nathu Pass, only two miles from where they started. Both Tibet and Sikkim lay at their feet when they got there, but they couldn't see much of either because of the stinging ice and thick mist the shrill snow-hurtling wind was lashing incessantly into their faces. It was a world of white with occasional islands of blue rock.

They found no baggage inspectors or customs officials on this boundary between two governments and they engaged in no formalities other than those of custom. They removed their Tibetan headgear and bowed in the four directions and tossed stones on pass-marking cairns which Crozier judged to be twenty to twenty-five feet high. Wildly flapping

prayer flags, tied to ropes, rocks, and trees carried heavenward the "*Om mani padme hum*" of all those who had hung them there. The Tibetans shouted the traditional "*Lha gyalo*," and Fort Knox hailed Sikkim with a sweep of his hand as "Dinjong," the Land of Rice.

Fort Knox, Rain, and Shine now prepared to turn back, but Duncan was going on to cook for these five jumping foreigners till they reached Gangtok. The Tibetan soldiers were obviously pleased at the prospect of returning to Lhasa, as even Rain wore a big smile on his usually impassive face. Crozier gave generously to these three bodyguards from his box of silver rupees, as he was grateful for the company of these alert little fellows who had worn rifles strapped to their backs over the long, lonely miles from Lhasa. They had proved to be good soldiers, brave men, and kind and thoughtful comrades. In fact, not only these soldiers, but everyone they had met on the way from Lhasa had been kind except the bandits who had tried to rob them. The American airmen and Tibetan soldiers clasped hands, Western style, and the handsome little riflemen grasped the reins of their mules and began walking down from the narrow ridge of Nathu Pass, back over the hard, high road to Lhasa.

The crew and the cook found the same loose, dangerous snow on the Sikkimese side of the pass as they began the descent, but the wind was calmer. They would have to go down from fourteen thousand to eight thousand feet to cover the twenty-seven miles to Gangtok. Crozier had more doubts than ever that they would make it that day. They still walked, in accordance with Tibetan custom, and also because of the danger of being mounted.

The cold, gray mist of high-flying clouds rushed by their heads, and now and then it cleared away, showing other gray layers lower down, looking like sullen billowy seas trapped in the high valleys. They rode along cliffs and ledges, crossed ridges, went over streams, and beneath great tumbling cataracts. Crozier held his breath as they walked out on log-supported ledges constructed on the bare faces of rocky walls. Beneath them these cliffs fell away to depths of thousands of feet, at the bottom of which raging torrents roared on their boulder-banishing way. The mules had a dangerous habit of walking on the very edge of the desolate, stony track, trying to eat the dead vegetation which peeped through the snow there on the edge of eternity. This was land-slide country, as these mountainsides were rotten with the heavy monsoon rains of summer.

By the time they reached Changu and its dak bungalow, above a calm, dark lake, the snow had begun to thin out to scattered patches. The steep slopes of rhododendron around the heart-shaped stretch of water had only small patches of white on them. The lake's surface, below them, looked like a big bowl of mercury, silver in the sun and leaden under cloud.

They ate a few bites of cold yak meat, then headed for Karponang, about ten miles down the track. Crozier concluded that was about as far as they would get, as the afternoon's sunlight was already westering and thin. At Karponang, they would still be ten or twelve miles from Gangtok.

Halfway between Changu and Karponang, they left the last of the snow, thanking their lucky stars for a more surefooted way, even though the trail went down more steeply than ever. They came to stretches of road paved with rough rock, wide enough

for two mules with riders to pass abreast. It was a paved trail fully as good as the roads of Roman times. These stretches of paved track speeded their caravan, and there was daylight to spare when they reached Karponang. They found the dak bungalow in an open space in the thick forest and bamboo at the top of a dark canyon, in which evening shadows were beginning to gather. They had come down four or five thousand feet below the elevation of Nathu Pass.

That evening, as they sat around the fire, they talked about their experiences coming down out of the Land of God.

"You know," said Spencer, "I've just been out there among the bamboo. It's kind of like being back home again. Never thought I'd be glad to see bamboo."

"Yeah, it is a relief to see something green again," Crozier replied. "Somehow it's a greener green than I've ever seen."

"Speaking of bamboo," McCallum broke in, "it makes me think of the guy I heard about who was stationed up in north Burma for months without any relief."

"How's that?" asked Crozier.

"Well, according to the way I heard it," McCallum replied, "this guy said, 'It's all right as long as you talk to the bamboo, but when the bamboo starts talking back to you—brother, you've had it.' "

Next morning, with only eleven more miles to go to reach Gangtok, they didn't get started till nine o'clock. The weather was bright, with an early sun coming from behind scattered clouds. The way was still rough, but they expected to reach Gangtok by early afternoon in spite of it. The pass loomed up

behind them in its white mantle, seemingly close enough for a snow avalanche to bury them if one should come tumbling down. And now and then, to the northwest, fifty miles away, they caught glimpses of Mount Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest peak, reaching more than twenty-eight thousand feet into the sky. This mountain, called "The Lord of the Five Treasures" by those born under its ramparts, filled the northwestern sky with its mighty, white mass. It seemed close enough that they could be on its slopes in an hour. Despite all the white beauty of its glistening ice, the great ridge of rock and snow seemed sinister to Crozier.

As they wound their way down the mountains, the air grew more temperate and the trees of the forest higher. The humble rhododendron shrub changed to a tree itself. Small growing things seemed to transform themselves into giants with the passing miles, as though the poles and the equator were only a few short leagues apart. The forest of fir and pine was changing gradually into rain forest of fern and tangled jungle.

When they stopped beside the trail about midway to Gangtok, Crozier heard a strange sound which puzzled him, a vague, faint whir and clicking, rhythmic singsong which seemed to come from all around. He listened carefully. All at once the answer hit him. Insects. And he realized he had not heard one while he was in Tibet.

While they were stopped, they noticed one of the mules shaking his head and wiggling his ears, and when he began snorting they examined him and found leeches, already swollen finger-thick and blue with blood, in his ears and on his nose. They pulled the bloodsuckers off, and the mule's nose and ears

bled profusely from the bites. Examining their clothes, they found two more of the tiny, hair-thin worms looking for an opening to the flesh and one already fastened to one of the men's legs. They had long since run out of cigarettes and couldn't burn the leech off like the builders of the Ledo Road were doing in Burma. Apparently the leech had not been attached long, as he was not much bigger than a needle. They pulled the carnivorous little creeper off the crewman's leg, leaving a bleeding bite which could easily become infected. They realized these minute parasites waited on every bush and stone they passed, and they were thankful they had not many miles to go. They only had to brush against these gray, harmless-looking creatures to have them attach themselves to their clothing and then hunt for an opening to the skin. Inspecting the area, Crozier found scores of them spanning their length with swift, measured pace, their heads swinging and searching for victims on which they might grow fat and bloody.

In growing warmth, at about half past one in the afternoon, they rode into Gangtok, Sikkim's capital of about three thousand people, situated in a valley at several thousand feet altitude. Icy Kanchenjunga, although forty miles away, seemed ready to fall on their heads, and below their feet, only a few miles south, was that rampant green monster, the jungle, waiting at almost sea level. Here, on the environs of Gangtok, they found orange and banana trees, orchids of many colors, and rhododendrons, tree-high, in red profusion. They headed for the British Residency.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THEY PASSED GALLOPING PONIES AND plodding mules and listened to the caravan bells of Tibetan traders as they rode into town, strangling in the dust of these animal trains going in the direction whence they had come —freight-handlers carrying they knew not what.

"How'd you like to be caravan jockeys, men?" Crozier called out. "Any man can turn back who wants a career at it."

"You never make us a proposition we'll accept," McCallum shouted back. "Nothing like the life of a fly-boy for me—as long as he's flying."

"No mules for me after this war, or flying machines, either," Spencer spoke up. "But I'm thankful for both right now, as long as they keep moving in the right direction."

"Look, men," Crozier called out as they saw their first bullock cart since leaving India. "We're getting back close to our home away from home."

"That bullock cart sure goes with the weather," remarked McCallum. "This lazy sun feels good."

As they made their way to the British Residency, they found Sikkim like Tibet in many respects. They saw Tibetan characters on the walls of the royal palace of Sikkim's ruler, prayer flags flapping on the roof, and the skulls of animals, colored strings, and sticks adorning it to fend off any demons that might take an interest in state affairs. But the house had glass windowpanes and, Crozier later discovered, telephones and typewriters. Soldiers in bright red

jackets and black braid guarded the place with British rifles. They passed a lama temple near the royal palace. Otherwise, Gangtok was a small town of wooden shops and stalls and a few houses built of stone.

They met people chanting the eternal supplication, "*Om mani padme hum*," people who turned their prayer wheels and counted their beads as they went about their daily business in the streets. But they saw signs of Hinduism, too—men with shaved heads, except for little tufts of hair at the tops of their skulls, with which they hoped to be pulled up to the next life when they died.

When the airmen arrived at the British Residency, about half a mile from the Sikkimese ruler's palace, it was still early in the afternoon. Crozier found the Residency one of the most attractive dwellings he had ever seen, a large two-story, high-gabled building with a metal roof, several chimneys, and wide verandahs. The crew entered terraced gardens through a gate, moved along inviting walks, passed trellises, shrubs, gnarled trees, tall ferns, and vines. In among tree dahlias and orchids, little Buddhist shrines stood half hidden and prayer pennants hung limp in the half-summery air.

Crozier's eyes took in the four directions. To the right of the Residency towered a steep, forest-covered hill. Against the far background of a pale-gray ridge ran a closer slope of darker gray in the middle distance, and to the west, in front of the Residency, yawned a deep, blue-shadowed valley and the sky-high snows of Kanchenjunga.

As they rode up to the rounded, peak-roofed entrance of the big, sprawling house, Basil J. Gould,

the British Political Officer in Sikkim, came out to meet them.

"I should imagine you're Lieutenant Crozier and crew in from Tibet. I'm B. J. Gould," he said, sticking out his hand. "We've been expecting you. I hope you've arrived none the worse for wear. Welcome to the Residency."

Crozier introduced himself, the members of the crew, and Duncan.

"We'll put you up here," said Gould hospitably, "as the visitors' bungalow isn't fit to be lodged in. The fireplace smokes and some of the windows are broken. Besides, the bells on the animals in the meadows around the rest house keep you awake with their infernal clatter unless you're worn out."

"Thank you for your kindness," Crozier replied. "I hate to seem hurried, but after all we're on military duty and need to get back to our organization as quickly as possible."

"I know how you feel, Lieutenant," sympathized Gould. "But you will have to remain here overnight, as you've missed the only regular transportation to Darjeeling today."

"What kind of transportation is it?" asked Crozier.

"The mail lorry," replied Gould. "It left three hours ago."

"A truck!" Crozier rejoiced. "Did you hear that, men? A truck! Thank goodness for a new kind of transportation."

"Yes, I should imagine you're sick of mules," Gould agreed. "Gangtok caught up with the automobile age some time ago, but Tibet hasn't."

"What time does the mail truck leave tomorrow?" asked Crozier.

"At half past ten in the morning," answered Gould. "We'll have you ready to go."

"How far is it to Darjeeling?" Crozier wanted to know.

"Sixty miles by the road, south and west," responded Gould. "From there, you will ride on rails to Calcutta."

They unloaded the caravan animals at the back of the Residency, alongside a low, solid-stone building with a metal roof, took what gear they needed, and gave the remainder to Duncan, who wanted to leave immediately. Crozier offered to pay the cook, but he steadfastly refused to take a single rupee. They removed most of their Tibetan clothing and sent it back to the Dinkilinka in Lhasa by their returning chef. Visions of all the smoky kitchens and yak-dung fires they had experienced rose up before them, but they each shook Duncan by the hand and sincerely wished him well anyway. As their servant of the fireside and table rode away, a lonely figure with his herd of mules, one of the airmen remarked:

"I'll never say those bad things about Spam again."

Their first thought was to shave and wash away the dust of the trail. Crozier was disappointed because they had to wait until next day, as they couldn't make up now for the slow time they made coming over Nathu Pass—and the delay at Gyantse.

Gould assigned them to their quarters in the Residency, where, after talking things over, the five crewmen decided their resources were too limited to purchase any clean clothing, even if something suitable could be found. All they had in addition to their dwindled supply of silver rupees was a two-weeks' growth of beard. During the ride from Lhasa, they

had bet on who would grow the best beard. Each now insisted his was superior, and since they couldn't decide and didn't have the personal funds to pay lost wagers anyway, they called the whole thing off.

Crozier counted the remaining silver coins in the box of five thousand rupees Major Sherriff had given him in Lhasa and came to the conclusion they had enough to shave and bathe because that didn't cost anything. They didn't have enough to reach Calcutta, provided they paid their railway passenger fares in Darjeeling.

After a good lunch was served to the crew, Gould called Crozier into conference and handed him an officially printed pass which bore the date, January 10, 1944, and granted the five members of the crew permission to leave Sikkim and enter the Darjeeling District at the border village of Rangpo.

As Crozier took the printed form, stamped with the Political Officer's official stamp and bearing his signature, he noticed the words, "Fee—Annas Eight Only," printed in large black type in the upper right-hand corner. He fished in his pocket and drew out a silver rupee.

"Here's the fee, sir," he said as he extended his hand to Gould.

"There is no fee," Gould replied. "Look carefully there in the remarks column and you will find the word 'free.' It's a slight contribution to the war effort. You'll note copies are being sent to the Deputy Commissioner of the District and to the police at Rangpo. You shouldn't have any trouble."

"Thanks to you," Crozier replied, pocketing his rupee.

At the end of the day, they watched the sun's last rays dye Kanchenjunga's snow and ice a blood red,

Pass granted under Section 4, Regulation V. of 1873, Fee—As. EIGHT ONLY.

District—Darjeeling. 163

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8
Register number of pass	Name of grantee with father's name and residence.	Period during which pass is valid.		Purpose for which the line is crossed and route to be followed.	Points where lines may be crossed, going & returning	Date of passing out-post at exist signed by out-post-officer.	Date of return to out-post.	REMARKS.
		From	To					
1. Lt. A.L. Crozier 2. F/Lt. J. McCallum 3. Corporal [illegible] Perram. 4. P.F.C.J.H. Huffmann. 5. Corporal K.B. Spencer.		11th Janry: 1944.	12th Janry: 1944.	On Duty.	Rangpo Rangpo			Free.
	Not authorised to enter		Nepal	Bhutan	and Tibet.			

N. B.—1. This Pass will be given up to the Officer Commanding the out-post on the grantee's return.

2 The grantee shall not visit any place or travel, or attempt to travel, by any route other than that indicated in the pass.

3. On receipt of written notice of the cancellation of the pass the grantee shall forthwith return within the "inner line" by such route as may be indicated in such notice, or if no route be indicated then by the shortest route.

DARJEELING ~~RANGPO~~ angtok

The ....10/1/44.... 19 .

Copy to the Deputy Commissioner, Darjeeling
British Police, Rangpo
for Deputy Commissioner.
Darjeeling.

K.N.P. PRESS.

PHOTOSTAT OF CREW'S OFFICIAL PASS INTO INDIA

then leave it a gray ghost in the dusk after the light departed. In a few minutes, the mighty sentinel was gone, swallowed by a quickly enveloping darkness.

Weary from the rigors of the trail and weather, they soon went to bed for a good night's sleep.

Next morning about eleven o'clock, as they rode out of town in the mail truck through a noisy, babel-voiced multitude of Sikhs, Hindus, Bhotias, native Lepchas, and Nepalese, a little girl tried to sell them some flowers when the Indian truck driver stopped at a street corner to buy a leaf-wrapped chew of pan. The shopkeeper mixed the chopped betel nut with aromatic spices and folded the whole into a green betel leaf for the driver, who popped the concoction into his mouth and chewed with the same energy Americans devote to chewing gum. The driver came back to the truck spitting on the ground from his red-stained teeth and lips.

As the truck moved to the outskirts of Gangtok, the five Americans saw their last *mani* stone, a huge rock on which was written the Buddhist prayer they would never forget: *"Om mani padme hum."*

Outside Gangtok, they rolled onto a rather well-kept highway, known as the Peshok Road, which ran between terraced paddies and fields where rice, wheat, and millet grew in season. Tangerine groves flourished in clusters around thatched huts, and their mouths watered when they saw a man with a big funnel-shaped basket of the loose-skinned, golden fruit slung on a strap around his forehead. The truck followed the highway to the village of Singtam, where the road came to the Tista River.

As the vehicle gradually lost elevation, it dropped

deeper and lower into more dense forests. Now that they had reached the bottom of the narrow Tista Valley, they found again the moisture-saturated heat of the Indian plains, produced by around 135 inches of rain a year. They began to sweat more than they had in weeks, their dirty clothing feeling sticky against their bodies.

The forests through which they rode grew to magnificent stature. Ferns reached literally to the height of trees and some of the trees rose to 150 feet; others brushed the hood of the truck as they rode along. A few trees were smooth, others covered with moss, and some were strung with masses of orchids. The orchids grew wild, literally covering everything. Tropical creepers wound about the trunks and limbs of the trees, jumped from one tree to another, and plaited, braided, and tangled themselves into jungle knots. They coiled themselves around beautiful blossoms on the ground, choking them, and hung down from high branches like green-dyed ropes. Crozier saw one which looked exactly like a hangman's noose.

The foliage was so dense the road seemed to be running through a tunnel, or a long endless tomb. Although the sun was shining, everything seemed to be in a green, damp twilight, and a mist permeated this twilight, making everything take on an eerie, unsubstantial quality. Nearby plants seemed real, those in the middle distance gray ghosts, and those far away only a wall of fog. The figures of men, vehicles, and animals they met seemed blurred in the distance, fading after they passed into the soggy, damp mass of green. All around in the humid air was the smell of reeking, decaying plant life—giant logs, wet moss, and mouldering leaves.

"We're getting back to the country where a new pair of shoes will rot in a month," Crozier said as they rode along.

"Yes, sir," Spencer observed. "We're running right smack back into Frigidaire's greatest problem."

The rapid, unregulated, and unchecked growth of the jungle somehow seemed terrifying to Crozier —masses and swarms of insects, plants choking one another to death, flowers which ate the unwary bug that crawled into their blossoms, and bright butterflies that satisfied their hunger as quickly on the carcasses of dead animals and birds as on the bright-colored jungle flowers. Crozier later found Sikkim has more than six hundred species of butterfly and around four thousand species of rhododendron.

The Tista River, along the hairpin turns on which they rode, was voluminous in its hurried fury to reach the Indian plain. It plunged with a roar like distant guns against the rock confines which held it, flinging itself against the masses of stone in its bed, breaking around them, and stampeding on in a sweeping, seething mass of foam-flecked water. It filled its dark, twisted gorges with misty steam, drowning the crew's conversation with its booming voice.

When they reached the Indian-Sikkimese border at the bleak, dusty village of Rangpo, only a few baskets of tangerines brightened the otherwise dreary scene. Border police authorities stopped the truck.

"At last—India, our home away from home," Spencer yelled.

"What if the cops here want to see my I.D. card?" McCallum asked facetiously. "I lost it when I

jumped. Someone around Tsetang is carrying it, I imagine."

"I still have my Texas driver's license," Crozier replied with a grin. "That ought to get us through."

"That'll only get us in trouble." McCallum retorted.

When Crozier presented the pass from Gould, the political officer at Gangtok, the police handed him a worn register to sign. As he did so, another guard was questioning a few Tibetans who had stepped off a bus bound for Gangtok. When it was the turn of one of the Tibetans to be questioned, he put out his tongue before beginning his reply.

"No doubt I'd think them the rudest characters in the world," Crozier thought to himself, "if I hadn't learned better on our little jumped-up journey. Who could have ever guessed it's their way of showing respect?"

They crossed over a narrow iron suspension bridge, and the Indian official on the other side waved them on after asking a few routine questions.

They wound through more paddy fields, the Tista roaring below them in green confusion over gray-white boulders and yellow sand. The jungle-clad mountains towered magnificently on both sides. On they went through more forests, rich with timber, the ferns and creepers still dangling down and swiping the vehicle as it passed.

When they reached a Tista Valley village twenty miles from Darjeeling, they crossed the river again at the juncture of the Darjeeling-Kalimpong road. The driver stopped at a low-roofed tea shop and had a cup of tea from a steaming pot, as well as a mound of brown, unpolished rice and some vegetables. Crozier and the crew decided to have some of the scald-

ing tea, even though they were sticky with sweat from the hot valley. It was a delight to get tea without salt, soda, and rancid yak butter, and—on recent occasions—perhaps a little yak dung.

As they left the little village, they got their last glimpse of the churning green Tista with its white collar of foam. Then the road began to mount up to higher country. Before they climbed far, they began to feel stray little vagrant breezes blowing around their necks now and then, cool and bracing. Soon the luminous white peak of Mount Kanchenjunga emerged against the clear, vivid blue of the winter sky, and as they climbed, they saw other high snow mountains and the tropical jungle, filled with green birds, all in one view. The mountains rose up before them, stairstep on stairstep, to the lord of them all, Kanchenjunga, which had a white plume blowing from its top across a lofty, ice-filled valley. As they rolled past big tea plantations and thick bamboo groves, the air grew chill, and they lost their sticky, sweaty feeling.

It was still early in the afternoon when they passed two villages, Lapchu and Ghoom, just before entering the Himalayan foothill city of Darjeeling.

The truck paused for a while in Ghoom, which was cloud-shrouded, before moving on to Darjeeling. The road ran straight through the village along a high ridge which fell away steeply at the backs of the dilapidated-looking huts on both sides of the street. The airmen were surprised to find a small monastery atop two or three pointed hills, with prayer wheels and dragons at the entrance of the main building, which was square and yellow, with an upward-curving roof.

"What's the name of this village?" asked Spencer.

Crozier pulled out his chart.

"Ghoom," the pilot replied, with his finger on the map.

"Well," observed Spencer, brushing back his long hair, "as far as I'm concerned, Ghoom is strictly full of gloom. Or maybe it's my hair in my eyes."

"It's no boom town anyway," commented Crozier.

Immediately after leaving the ridge-riding village, the truck emerged again into sunshine.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THEY PASSED THROUGH TEA GARDENS right up to the outskirts of this hill city of thirty-five thousand people, built on a long mountain ridge running north and south at an altitude of more than seven thousand feet.

Darjeeling is a city which catches the fury of the summer monsoon thunderstorms, but now, in winter, it was bright and quiet, with only a few wispy clouds down below, floating like isolated, lonely ships at anchor against the shore ridges of jungle and tea.[1] This was the biggest town they had been in since their jump, but somehow it seemed insignificent, small, lost, and lonely, resting below the gleaming snow and icy glaciers of Kanchenjunga and a dozen other peaks more than twenty thousand feet high.

"I'd like to get some leave up here next summer," said Crozier, "and escape some of the prickly heat down on the plains."

"Yeah," agreed McCallum, "it would stop a man's itching, twitching, and bitching. It's just the place for us summer soldiers and sunshine patriots."

As they rode through, they found Darjeeling a city of widely scattered houses, with hotels and homes on the high slopes and the squat stone buildings of the bazaar lower down. They discovered something they hardly expected to find—a small racetrack near a high precipice.

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[1] Darjeeling no doubt gets its name from the heavy thunderstorms of the monsoon season. At any rate, the name of the city comes from the Tibetan, *dorje ling*, meaning "The Place of the Thunderbolt."

The town turned out to be a melting pot of religion. In a few glances, they saw the yellow roof of a Buddhist temple, bowed upward at the eaves in the Chinese style, a towerlike, multi-storied pagoda, the steeple of a Christian church, and two or three lamaist temples. Over all this, on the highest hill, Tibetan prayer flags waved.

They headed for the railway station, where they planned to catch the train going down the Himalayan foothills to the Indian plains—a drop of around seven thousand feet in forty miles.

As they continued their ride through town in the mail truck, they took counsel together and determined that now, since they were back in India, they would follow the example of the Indians and ride the rails ticketless.[2] If they rode free, their remaining rupees would be ample for the journey.

At the railway station, the five airmen found the oddest and smallest train they had ever seen in their lives, the pride of the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway. It was standing beside the station platform on its narrow-gauge rails getting up steam for the run down the mountains. The locomotive, painted a bright red, belched smoke from its tall, slender stack. With no pilot or cowcatcher and an open shed for a cab, it was only a little taller than a man of average height, the driver and his fireman being barely able

[2] American soldiers frequently took the cue from their Indian allies and rode without paying. It's still an Indian custom. According to published reports in India, nearly seven million, six hundred thousand ticketless passengers were caught by the Indian railways in 1954-55. A majority of the persons caught paid the fares and penalties, but more than two hundred thousand had to be prosecuted. Later reports say that railway officials have plans to travel incognito as part of the drive to check ticketless travel. The Railway Board also was reported as having plans to stop trains at unscheduled points to raid their passengers who do not have evidence of having paid fares.

to stand straight behind the firebox and steam boiler.[3] The little engine had a small coal tender on top of the boiler and at the side, from which the fireman, in dirty clothes and a clean turban, shoveled coal into the roaring little furnace. The engine also had a tender hooked on behind, and a boy sat on top of the coal making little lumps out of big ones. The locomotive had two driving wheels on each side and no truck wheels, and on its front two rectangular boxes rested, full of sand, no doubt used to good advantage in the monsoon season to insure the wheels a firmer grip on the rails of this mountain railroad.

Behind the engine and tender were four cars, painted a dull red indeed compared to the fire-wagon shade of the locomotive, these passenger carriages being about twenty-five feet long and less than seven feet wide. As Crozier and the crew stepped aboard a coach, they found it comfortably fitted, and thirty minutes later, the locomotive puffed off easily for a downhill pull all the way to Siliguri, the train's terminal at the base of the mountains.

From Darjeeling to Siliguri, as the crow flies, it is only about twenty-five miles, but aboard the Darjeeling Himalayan's mountain-climbing train, it is twice that distance—fifty-one miles of loops, reverses, and curves, built that way to avoid the expense of costly tunnels. The rails mainly follow an old cart track up from the plains to Darjeeling, zigzagging over deep ravines and precipices, taking sharp curves, and going across steep inclines. The road rises a foot in every twenty to twenty-five feet on the up trip.

The American airmen, on their trip down, wound around a big loop at Ghoom, the village they had

[3] On Indian railroads, the locomotive engineer is called the driver.

passed through on the way into Darjeeling from Gangtok, the first of many loops on their descent to the plains. The train made almost a complete circle on the Ghoom loop, then passed over the slope it had to cross by means of a bridge, thereby quickly attaining a lower elevation. Farther down the line, the train came to stretches of track where it went both forward and backward in getting down the mountains. To enable it to accomplish this, three stretches of track had been laid in places. The train went forward down the first stretch, then backed up a diagonal segment, then forward again on another alignment of rails parallel to the first track, but lower down the side of the mountain.

The train ran along the very edge of dizzy precipices, overlooking dark gorges, and afforded a glimpse now and then of Kanchenjunga and her white, snow-clad companions. The last time Crozier glimpsed the lofty, sky-high peaks, they seemed to have receded and become icy apparitions, with no foundations on the horizon, caused by haze at the base of the massif and cold, clear atmosphere around the upper reaches.

The little train coasted down through different climatic zones, the driver making generous applications of the brakes, and the five airmen—previously reduced from wings to shoes and saddles—were pleased now to be elevated back to wheels. They felt so good they gave themselves up to enjoying the scenery.

Each thousand feet they came down brought a change in the plant life—first stunted growth just under sublime mountain peaks, then primeval forest, and finally green jungle. When they started down from Darjeeling, they saw tall oaks and chest-

nuts interspersed with walnut trees and magnificent magnolia and rhododendron shrubs growing in the wild. Down to four thousand feet, they looked out on birch and maple and ferns as tall as trees. Mosses carpeted the side of the railroad track and hung down from the branches of the trees. Still lower, the forest was filled with fig trees and screw pines, and in the lowest forests, at the base of the foothills, they saw stalwart sal trees rising out of an endless landscape of tea gardens and paddy fields. Out of the deep ravines and up the mountains, gigantic firs, buttressed semul, palms, and giant bamboo were entwined with a maze of creepers.

The closer they came to the plains, the paler became the blue of the sky. Under the mellow winter sun, the green carpet of the plantations down below undulated over the hills right down to the level earth. Beyond, farther away, they saw a big muddy river, probably the Tista, no longer brawling and in a hurry, as it slipped at last free from the mountain gorges and gods who had tried to hold it. Out on the plain, the river wound and turned in big sweeps by checkered, winter-gray rice paddies and tiny white villages.

The train finally slipped down out of the hills and onto the dreary, level plain. Forgetting the brakes now, and opening the throttle, the driver sped the ten or twelve remaining miles to Siliguri. As the train puffed through the last low hills, the green carpet of tea they had seen from above now appeared as countless, endless rows. Among the shrubs, the houses of tea pickers rose on tall piers, probably a precaution against monsoon floods and occasional marauding tigers.

When the train ground to a stop at the white Sili-

guri station, no one had asked them for a ticket, so Crozier and the crew got off and melted into the mass of humanity surging up and down beside the cars.[4]

Siliguri was a typical Indian town, a mixture of huts, traditional temples, and modern concrete and stone buildings. Siliguri station was also a typical station, with the milling multitude on the platform, brown men in white dhotis, perfectly postured, amber-complexioned women in bright saris, and short, slant-eyed people from the nearby foothills. Stalls at the station were filled with oranges, bananas, sweetmeats, pan, cigarettes, leaf tobacco, and magazines with pictures of American actresses and Hindu goddesses. Water buffaloes with hides black as night and eyes hard and shiny as dark marble pulled carts piled high with heavy freight, their masters beating on their backsides, evidently trying to give them some enthusiasm for their work, as they already were pressing against their collars for all they were worth.

"These wallahs here beating hell out of their buffaloes remind me of a guy I roomed with in Calcutta," Crozier remarked as they waited for their train.

"How's that?" asked McCallum.

"This guy lived in Delhi for a while," Crozier replied, "and said it was a common sight to see a tonga-wallah beating hell out of his horse. He said he figured the belief in the transmigration of souls in the

[4] According to published reports from India in 1957, the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway was about ready for the scrap heap. The report in the Calcutta *Statesman* said many still rode free, including tough students who intimidated the trainmaster. Queried in 1959, the Indian Embassy in Washington reported the little train was still riding high.

Hindu and Buddhist religions was a pretty good idea."

"What's the transmigration of souls got to do with a tongawallah beating his horse?"

"Well, you know, they say a bad man's likely to be some kind of animal in the next life, and this guy said maybe when the horse and the tongawallah were reborn, maybe the horse would be the tongawallah and the tongawallah would be the horse, and the horse could beat hell out of the tongawallah for a change."

As McCallum laughed, the high, piercing whistle of a wider-gauge train of the Eastern Bengal Railway sounded as it approached the station. The five crewmen clambered aboard when the train pulled in, following the course of the ticketless crowd.

Later, down the line at Parbatipur, they emulated the Indian fine art of grabbing an empty first-class compartment for themselves. Since they had no bedding with them, they slept or tried to sleep on the hard board berths.

"A guy needs to carry a hammock on the Indian railroads," McCallum said with disgust.

"I saw an Englishman who did," Crozier spoke up quickly. "I was riding on the Oudt and Tirhut. This Englishman swung up his hammock that night after dark." The pilot paused, then went on. "You know what those Transportation Corps GI's at Kathgodam called the Oudt and Tirhut Railway?"

"Can't imagine," replied McCallum. "Probably something more fitting."

"Yeah. They called it the 'Old and Tired.' "

"I got no complaints against the Indian railroads," spoke up Spencer sleepily from his berth. "They're not charging me anything, at least yet.

And besides, I could be riding a mule or a parachute."

That night, as Crozier finally managed to doze off, in spite of the sway of the train and the similarity of the bunk to a well-paved highway, he vaguely became aware of a droning voice in his ear.

"*Chaee, chaee, chaee,*" the voice repeated over and over.[5]

Crozier, half awake, was mystified. When he finally came back to full consciousness, he realized the train had stopped at a station and a tea wallah was just outside the window trying to sell him a cup of tea. Raising himself on his elbow, Crozier shouted:

"Go away! We don't want any tea."

This made absolutely no impression on the tea merchant, which was no surprise to Crozier, and the tea wallah continued his desultory cry on the deserted station platform. Crozier saw only one other person, a skinny old man asleep beneath a tank of drinking water, which had its contents identified in three languages.

Crozier was accustomed to seeing big crowds on Indian railway platforms, not empty stations. He supposed it was the lack of potential customers for the tea wallah which gave him the urge to fish a silver rupee out of the box he had carried from Lhasa. He raised the window and tossed the coin toward the tea vendor. The tea wallah picked it up and began pouring a cup of the hot beverage from a pot. Just then the train started moving.

"*Nay chaee,*" Crozier called out in Hindustani. "*Baksheesh.*"[6]

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[5] *Chaee* is the Hindustani word meaning tea.

[6] "No tea! A gift!"

The old tea wallah smiled a red-toothed, betel-stained smile, and waved the teacup he held as the train gathered speed toward the darkness beyond the platform.

Meter-gauge and broad-gauge trains took them without mishap into Calcutta, where they were unable to get out of the Calcutta station without paying their fares. Had they stopped at some smaller station, like Kanchrapara, they could have eased onto the platform for a free ride.

Crozier explained their financial embarrassment to station officials and asked them to get in touch with Colonel George McGregor, commander of the Air Transport Command at Dum Dum Air Base.[7] The station master accepted their signatures on one of the railway's printed forms for the amount of the fares and then got Colonel McGregor on the telephone. The colonel advised Crozier he would send a jeep for him and the crew.

At Dum Dum, Colonel McGregor asked them a few questions, then made arrangements for them to be billeted at the Grand Hotel, where they got rooms from Major Robert Pool, the American billeting officer. Sergeant B. B. Stroud, noncommissioned billeting officer, gave them rooms which cheered their travel-weary bodies and hearts.

After they bathed and shaved, they put on clean uniforms, which they borrowed from other American military residents of the Grand. Crozier was not satisfied with the trousers he got, as there was only one button on the fly. His free-hearted benefactor apparently had lost his Army sewing and

[7] Crozier, after nearly twenty years, is not sure about the first name of Colonel McGregor. He thinks his name was George.

button kit. To make matters worse, Crozier, before he could borrow needle, thread, and thimble, was summoned to a residence, the scene of a cocktail party for American, British, and Oriental officers, including Lord Louis Mountbatten. Crozier could hardly get his mind on the polite and curious social questions about his adventure. He was too concerned about the open fly on his borrowed, makeshift trousers. But apparently his listeners took no notice of the breach in his breeches, and he departed as he came, with no loss of face or social dignity.

"There was mighty little face to lose," he told his comrades when he returned to the hotel.

"Seems to me you weren't concerned with face," McCallum remarked. "Just the opposite. You were worried about the other end."

"Let's say I maintained my usual formal reserve and suffered no indignity to my honorable station." Crozier grinned.

Afterward, the crew gathered in Crozier's room, and while he was sewing buttons on the fly of his pants, the four called for an examination of the Lhasa rupee box, in order to check the state of the treasury. Crozier, as chancellor and commander of their common fortune, upon completion of his thimble work, counted the silver coins and found fifty-three of the original five thousand. He decided to distribute the fifty-three rupees equally among the five of them, but after dividing five into fifty-three, he realized three would be left over. One of the airmen suggested they resolve the dilemma by cleaning out the exchequer and earmarking the funds at once for a bottle of the best Scotch whiskey to be found in the Empire's second city. They all agreed they should celebrate their return from the Land of

God to at least a minor settlement from God's Country.

Next morning they agreed they should get Huffman to the hospital, and, of course, the medics would want to give all of them the once-over. They were astounded at the X-ray photographs of Huffman's shoulder. Despite the break from the parachute drop and a dislocation when the mule threw him, Huffman's shoulder had healed perfectly straight.

When the medical routine and other preliminaries were over, including two or three sessions between Crozier and General Tom Hardin, commanding general of the India-China Wing of the Air Transport Command, the quintet of unwilling adventurers into Tibet headed for Jorhat to rejoin their outfit.

They arrived in Jorhat January 20, 1944, thirty-two days after they rode out of Lhasa and fifty-two days after they left the runway in Kunming. A few miles to the north of Jorhat, they saw the Brahmaputra again, four miles wide, with its green islands, multiple channels, and many shifting sandbars. It was a different kind of river here. At Tsetang, where their plane had plunged into it, and below Chusul, where they had crossed it in a skin boat, it flowed like the mountain river it was, among giant boulders, or between more restricted banks. Here it was a quiet, muddy monster of the plains, ready to flow in killing flood when the monsoon came. It hardly seemed possible that it was the same river, after nearly two months and hundreds of high, cold miles. To Crozier, it seemed a year and thousands of miles since they last had seen the Brahmaputra. As his mind went back to Kunming, which they had left

more than seven weeks before, he thought that moment on the runway in China seemed an age ago.

"Seems to me we've been operating under another kind of time," Crozier said to McCallum.

"Yeah," McCallum replied, "but Brahma's Son has caught up with us again, or we've caught up with him. It's good to see the old Brahmaputrid."[8]

That night, all five of them felt as if they were home again when they heard the jackals crying like little lost children in the darkness and saw copper-colored lizards running across the walls of their *bashas*.

They were soon flying the Hump again to Kunming, shuttling back and forth almost night and day to help keep China in the war. It was nearly two months later before Crozier found time to send Major Sherriff some promised American cigarettes. At the same time he wrote letters to Dr. Kung and Ringang in Lhasa. McCallum and Spencer also wrote Sherriff, joining Crozier in thanking everyone in Lhasa who had shown them kindness.

It was late spring or early summer before they heard from Lhasa. Sherriff wrote Crozier from Dinkilinka April 24, 1944, and Crozier received the letter about six weeks later through the post office at Gangtok, Sikkim. Crozier assembled the crew in his *basha* and read the two pages, written in the characteristic hand they had come to know in the Tibetan capital:

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[8] "Brahma's Son" means the Brahmaputra. Americans often referred to the river in mock scorn as the "Brahmaputrid."

British Mission
Lhasa.
via Gangtok.
Sikkim.
26th April.

Dear Crozier Tamas.

I was just going to sit down & write to you, when a parcel was handed to me. This contained your American cigarettes, & I am most grateful to you for sending them. I like these cigarettes: they have more in them than ours do.

Many thanks for your letter of March 16th. I heard from McCallum & Sunia in the same post, & hope to answer their letters shortly. I suppose you were sorry for some group photographs. I had lost your address, so sent them down to Mrs Cranidge & asked her to send them on. I think I told you that we had to leave me suddenly & go down to see a Doctor in Calcutta. It was much too far for her travelling in Feb. - March, about the worst time of the year. But she got through alright and was more the worse. Now she is staying with her sister in Kalimpong (Mrs Odling) & is rapidly getting fit again. I also sent her a small print of a Kodachrome size film of you & me together, taken in the garden here, just to remind you of those days. You will be sorry to hear that your Tsetang friend, Sana Utsab, died last month in Tsetang. I have not heard particulars, but believe he got pneumonia.

Tony is laid up again with poisoned foot which crops up in this room. Lhasa is a very different place now to when you

PHOTOSTAT OF SHERRIFF'S LETTER TO CROZIER IN INDIA

were here. We had a long winter, the first one since is time about over now. It's pleasantly warm all day now & there are some flowers to be seen at last. On the peach trees are in bloom & the grass in the garden is green. It's a pity you couldn't have seen Nanking in spring or summer, but I don't advise you to try again! Fong hasn't heard you calling, but he is much busier nowadays, then little time in the afternoons to listen in.

I sent on your letters to Dr. King in Ningpo. The latter has gone off on six weeks pilgrimage somewhere, and Dr. King will soon be returned expect to return to China in the summer.

If Peter & I are ever in the States, you may be sure we'll come see you — order or no order. When that may be goodness knows. On this mess has to be cleared up first. I get copies of Life pretty regularly now, after reading Lear, would much like to see Texas. There seems to be great competition as to whether Texas or California is the best place, don't bother to vote both.

Good luck to you & to the rest of the band. Hope your compass needle goes wrong. Love & thanks again for the cigarettes.

Yours ever

Minnie Vautrin

BRITISH MISSION,
LHASA,
VIA GANGTOK, SIKKIM,
24TH APRIL

DEAR CROZIER TEXAS.

I was just going to sit down & write to you, when a parcel was handed to me. This contained your American cigarettes, & I'm most grateful to you for sending them. I like these cigarettes. They have more in them than ours do.

Many thanks too for your letter of March 16th. I heard from McCallum & Spencer in the same post, & will try to answer their letters shortly. I hope by now you've got some group photographs. I had lost your address, so sent them down to Mrs. Sherriff & asked her to send them on. I think I told you that she had to leave me suddenly & go down to see a doctor in Calcutta. It wasn't much fun for her traveling in February-March, about the worst time of the year. But she got through alright and was none the worse. Now she's staying with her sister in Kalimpong (Mrs. Odling) & is rapidly getting fit again. I also sent her a small piece of Kodachrome cine film of you and Mac together, taken in the garden here, just to remind you of these days. You will be sorry to hear that your Tsetang friend, Sana Ullah, died last month in Tsetang. I haven't heard particulars, but believe he got pneumonia.

Foxy [Reginald Fox] is laid up again with poisoned feet which keeps him to his rooms. Lhasa is a very different place now to when you were here. We had a long winter, & the frost at night is just about over now. It's pleasantly warm all day now & there are some flowers to be seen at last. All the peach trees are in blossom & the grass in the garden is green. It's a pity you couldn't have seen Lhasa in spring or summer, but I don't advise you to try again! Foxy hasn't heard you calling [on the plane radio], but he is much busier nowadays, & has little time in the afternoons to listen in.

I sent on your letters to Dr. Kung & Ringang. The latter has gone off for six weeks pilgrimage somewhere, and Dr. Kung will soon be relieved & hopes to return to China in the summer.

If Betty & I are ever in the States, you may be sure we'll

come to see you—order or no order. When that may be goodness knows. All this mess has to be cleared up first. I get copies of *Life* pretty regularly now, & after reading that, would much like to see Texas. There seems to be great competition as to whether Texas or California is the best place, so I better go & see both.

Good luck to you & the rest of the band. May your compass never go wrong. Many thanks again for the cigarettes.

Yours sincerely,
GEORGE SHERRIFF

Crozier later received a letter from Sherriff which had been mailed earlier than the first one he received. The crew heard from Mrs. Sherriff in Kalimpong and received group photographs made in Lhasa, but they never did get the movie film made of Crozier and McCallum at Dinkilinka. Crozier and Spencer tried on several occasions to make radio contact with Reginald Fox's AC4YN in Lhasa, but they never received an answer to their calls. And so they lost touch with the Holy City.

Time went on, and their adventure receded in their minds; but Tibet never completely left them. As the weeks and months of war passed, and the heat and the monsoon wilted and wet them, they sometimes had a strange yearning for the sight of white banners of snow flying from high mountain peaks tall as the blue sky of the Land of God.

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भैमसिपयाङ्

Tsangpo River

N

Lhasa

Drepung

Kyi River

GUKAR PASS
19,500'

Chusul

Samye

Tsangpo R.

Tsetang

MT. NOJIN
24,000'

NYAPSO PASS
16,600'

Samding

YAMDROK LAKE

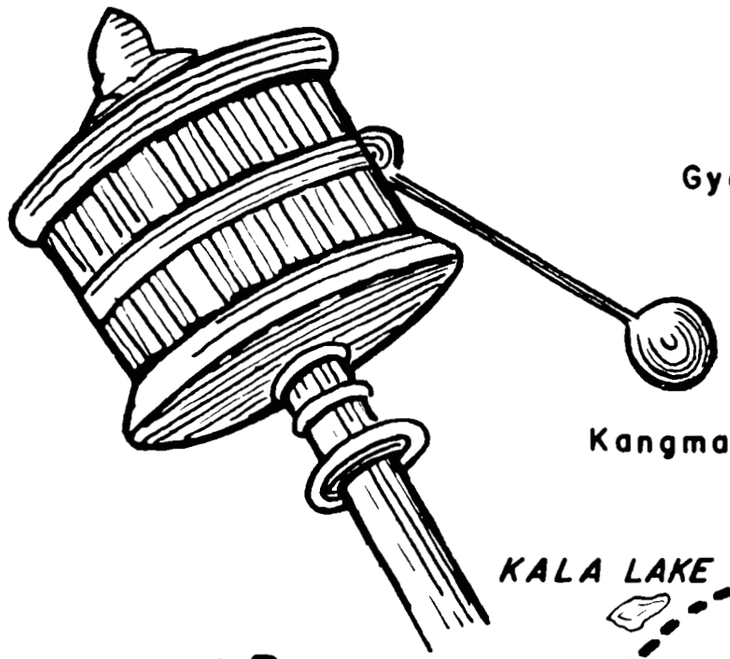
Gyantse

Nangkatse

KIRO
PASS
16,100'

"Milky" Plain

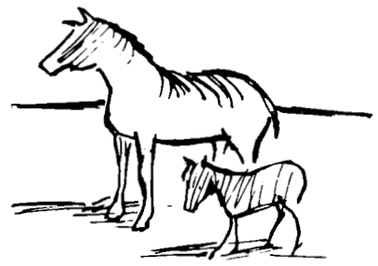
Grassy Plain

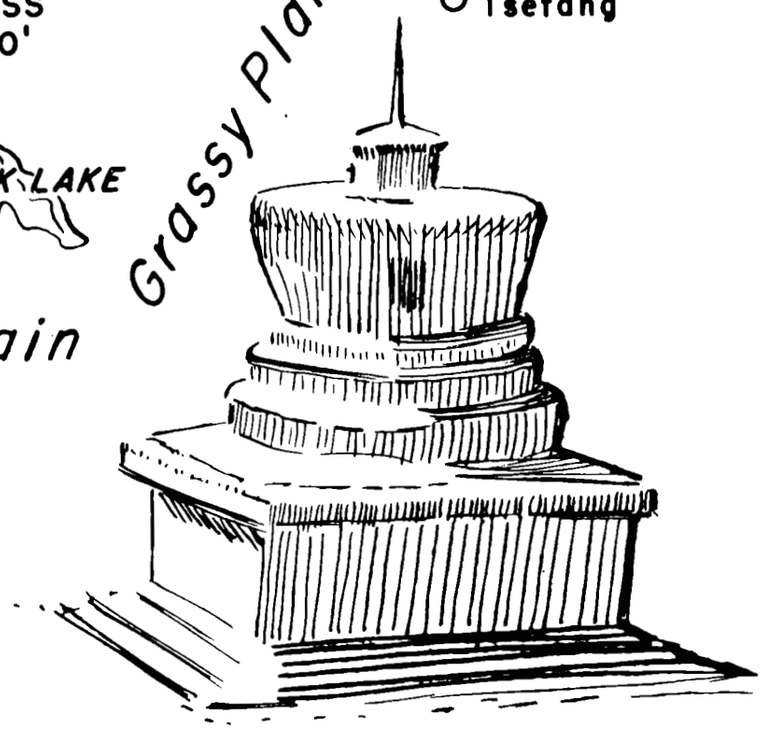


Kangmar

KALA LAKE

SNOWY RANGE
with peaks up to 23,000'





TIBET

Dochen

RHAM
LAKE

SIKKIM

TIBET

BHUTAN

KANCHENJUNGA
GLACIER

TANG
PASS
15,200'

Phari

MT. CHOMOLHARI
24,000'

NATHU PASS
14,800'

Yatung

Gangtok

Return of the Crew after the Jump

--- ROUTE OF THE AIRMEN'S MULE CARAVAN
THE REMAINDEROF THE JOURNEY WAS BY TRUCK, TRAIN & PLANE

Scale: 1 inch = 25 miles